International Master's Program in International Studies
National Chengchi University

國立政治大學國際研究英語碩士學位學程

The Rohingya Crisis – Perspectives of Key Actors in the Burmese Society

從緬甸重要人士之觀點探討羅興亞危機

Yannick Heinemann (韓克洋)
Advisor: Sun, Tsai-wei (孫采薇)

May 2019

Abstract

Discrimination of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar as has been an issue for decades. Contrary to the hopes, the country's democratic transition did not commence a comprehensive ethnic reconciliation. On the contrary, it laid the foundation for a large-scale campaign of purposeful displacement of Rohingya in 2017. This thesis focuses on the framework of symbolic politics to assess the underlying drivers of Rohingya repressions since the country's democratic transition. It assumes that goal –driven elites exploit ethnic cleavages in their favour. Under references to a myth-symbol complex, they deepen ethnic aversions to a point where a presumably hostile "other" has to be fended off for the sake of the prevalence of the in-group. Democratisation facilitates this process, as it creates an environment for unregulated competition, where actors expect benefits from ethnic outbidding. Based on public expressions made by key societal and political actors in Myanmar after the country's democratisation, this thesis shows that indeed elites are responsible for creating an anti-Muslim narrative. Brought up by religious actors in Rakhine State and impelled by local ethno nationalist parties, this narrative increasingly defined the image of Muslims as a threat to Myanmar. As the central government under USDP rule first allied with chauvinist forces, and under the NLD turned a blind eye, the depiction of Rohingya transformed from "illegal immigrants" to a "terrorist threat". Accordingly, measures to repress Muslims got more severe and eventually Rohingya were expelled without significant popular opposition. Thus, a direct connection between actors advancing Islamophobia and actual acts of ethnic violence can be inferred.

緬甸若開邦的羅興亞穆斯林遭受了數十年的歧視待遇，並未因該國邁向民主過渡而有所轉變，甚至在 2017 年，更成為大規模族群仇恨運動的目標。本文的研究重點在探討緬甸自民主轉型以來，驅動仇視羅興亞人的根本因素與政治論述，其假設為政治菁英因其自私利益，操作族群槓桿，利用種種神話與政治符號所交織的語境，加深了主流社會族群對於「他者」的厭惡與「他者威脅」的想像。而「民主化」更激化了上述過程，因為它為不受管制的競爭創造了有利環境，在此各方行為者莫不期望從族群鬥爭中受益（如獲取選票）。本文以緬甸民主化後，中央政府、地方政府、與社會三層面的主要政治行為者的公開言論為研究基礎，並發現這些政治菁英們確實需為其創造了反穆斯林的敘事與氛圍負責。直言之，反穆斯林言論起初是由若開邦的激進僧侶提出，並受到當地民族主義政黨的推動，而使得越來越多當地居民相信穆斯林對緬甸造成威脅。在鞏發黨（USDP）統治下的中央政府，由於選舉考量，首先與沙文主義勢力結盟，而其後繼之的全國民主聯盟（NLD）政府並未改變此路線，甚至因為情勢惡化而進一步對羅興亞穆斯林從「非法移民」轉定義為「恐怖主義份子」。因此，鎮壓穆斯林的措施變得更加激烈，最終羅興亞穆斯林便在沒有受到民眾強烈反對的情況下被驅逐與清洗。總之，本文認為推動仇視伊斯蘭教的行為者，以及具體族群暴力行為，兩者間具有直接的相關性。

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Figures and Tables

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

With the third and fourth wave of democratisation and the end of the Cold War, inter-state conflicts have declined while intrastate violence emerged as the most common form of conflict. Reasons for these often-lethal encounters vary from case to case and frequently multiple non-state actors and at least one state-actor are involved at the same time. Ethnic cleavages and tensions are often involved, but research on the conditions under which ethnicity causes or prolongs a conflict has not produced a universal approach. Approaches are as diverse as the nature of different internal conflicts. Having more than 135 different ethnic groups with their respective language and culture, Myanmar seems prone to ethnic conflicts. The country is indeed one of the regions that has been ridden by internal conflict for several decades. A majority of these revolve around demands for self-determination and recognition of national minorities. One of the groups that is not officially recognised by the Burmese government are the Rohingya. Despite being resident in their area, presumably even before the Burmese state gained independence from its colonial ruler, they are deprived of citizens' rights and denounced as illegal Bengali immigrants. Their religion and language make them easily identifiable as foreigners by Burmese Buddhist, who have grown susceptible to the narrative of a Muslim takeover. Since its founding, the Burmese State has taken up the promise to protect the Buddhist population from external threats. In this course, previous military governments have disenfranchised Rohingya and attempted to disperse them in the name of regulating illegal immigration. Some of these measures have genocidal character, ranging from murder and abduction to rape, destruction of property and forced birth control. After decades of military dictatorship and isolation, the country finally developed a functioning democracy in the first decade of the new millennium, drawing a growing international attention and interest by human rights organisations and scholars of democratisation and ethnic conflict. Hopes were high that the new government would be more concerned about human rights issues and inclusion of minorities. However, up to now no considerable progress has been observed. The democratisation instead has contributed to the deepening of ethnic cleavages, and advanced the Rohingya expulsion. This thesis intends to examine the political actors responsible for Rohingya discriminations, their motivation, argumentation, conduct and how democracy encourages the exploitation of ethnicity.

1.1 BRIEF HISTORY OF MYANMAR PRIOR TO THE DEMOCRATISATION

Today Myanmar is a state with great ethnic diversity. A census identified 135 ethnic groups within Burmese territory.[1] In 2014, a vast majority, constituting 88% of the Burmese population, are Buddhists, while Christians and Muslims make up 6.2% and 4.3% respectively. A major part of the more than 2 million Burmese Muslims lived in Myanmar's western province Rakhine.[2] Rohingya, in particular, inhabit the stretch of land along the coast in Rakhine's north between the State's northern Border to Bangladesh and Sittwe and the area between Buthidaung and Rathidaung (see Fig. 1).

After the end of British colonial rule and during the following nation building, the Bamar-ethnicity and Buddhism came to dominate state and society. Consequently, supressed minorities engaged in violent protest for self-determination. This state of civil war remained present for most of second part of the 20th century. Even now, after democratic transition and efforts to negotiate a peace or ceasefire agreement, clashes between ethnic armies and security forces are still a regular occurrence.

Early Burmese history shows influences from Chinese, Tibetan, Thai and Cambodian as well as Indian culture, with Hinduism and Buddhism arriving via trade routes with India and Sri Lanka. Around the 11th century, an emerging ethnically Burmese pagan kingdom spread out along the Irrawaddy Valley and incorporated smaller local tribes and cultures. The kingdom adopted Buddhism as state religion and served as its protector, allowing the religious community to grow continuously. Yet, the religious society was not exclusive and allowed for cultural and religious pluralism.[3]

---

[1] Nick Cheesman, "How in Myanmar "National Races" Came to Surpass Citizenship and Exclude Rohingya," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 47, no. 3 (2017a)., 8.

[2] "The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census," in *Census Atlas Myanmar* (Department of Population; Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, 2014)., 26.

[3] Azeem Ibrahim, The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar's Hidden Genocide, (Oxford University Press, 2016)., 34-35, 37-38

FIGURE 1- MAP OF MYANMAR AND RAKHINE(ROHINGYA TERRITORY (LIGHT RED) ADDED BY THE AUTHOR)4

After a series of wars with the British Empire, Burma (including Arakan) became a British colony in 1886. The colonial ruler focused on the central regions and the exploitation of

---

[4] MIMU UN Cartographic Section, "Rakhine State, Myanmar (as of 16 Jul 2013)," ed. UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2013).

its resources. Frontier regions remained relatively autonomous.[5] The British governed Burma under the principle of "divide and rule". On the one hand, they set up a centralised state and extensive bureaucracy closely tied to British India. On the other hand, they heavily restricted power of local leaders, marginalizing the Buddhist and Bamar majority.[6] The proximity of the colonies of British India and British Burma furthermore facilitated immigration of Indian workers.[7] Additionally, the British recruited non-Bamar ethnic groups for administrative and military positions, contributing to further separation between Bamar and Indian immigrants in the central areas and other ethnic groups in the periphery.[8] Consequently, the country's demographics were coined by "plural societies", several ethnic communities that coexisted but never merged into a single political unit.[9] During the turbulent decades of the First World War, Great Depression and Second World War, anti-colonial movements and hardened identities formed and rejection of British colonisers and their Indian supporters grew into occasional hostilities.[10] Due to considerable influence and armed resistance of the Burmese Independence Army, against British and Japanese occupation, Burmese independence was realized in 1948.

Postcolonial Burma inherited a complex mixture of ethnic groups, whose territories were included in the Burmese state. Aung San, General in the Burmese Independence army and father of Aung San Suu Kyi, had laid the foundation for a multi-ethnic Burmese federal union in crafting the Panglong agreement in 1947. This agreement allowed administrative autonomy for frontier states, with the prospect of independence if the union should fail. Based on the agreement, the Union of Burma was founded in 1948. Regardless of the inclusive idea of the Panglong Agreement, the federation experienced a domination of the Bamar majority and a disenchantment of multiple minorities, which were not given similar liberties as other groups. As a result, multiple insurgencies of ethnic groups arose and eventually led to the disintegration of the union.[11]

The military, led by Ne Win, seized power in 1962, stating that the coup was necessary to prevent chaos and disorder. However, insurgencies prevailed with 25 armed groups existing

---

[5] S.C. Saha, *Perspectives on Contemporary Ethnic Conflict: Primal Violence or the Politics of Conviction?* (Lexington Books, 2006)., 56.

[6] Kim Jolliffe, "Ethnic Armed Conflic and Territorial Administration in Myanmar," ed. The Asian Foundation (Yangon, Myanmar: The Asia Foundation, 2015)., 9.

[7] Carl H. Landé, "Ethnic Conflict, Ethnic Accommodation, and Nation-Building in Southeast Asia," *Studies in Comparative International Development* 33, no. 4 (1999)., 101.

[8] Jolliffe, "Ethnic Armed Conflic and Territorial Administration in Myanmar.", 9.

[9] Landé, "Ethnic Conflict, Ethnic Accommodation, and Nation-Building in Southeast Asia.", 101.

[10] Ibrahim, *The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar's Hidden Genocide*., 42-44.

[11] N. Ganesan, "Democratization and Its Implications for the Resolution of Ethnic Conflict in Myanmar," (The Institute for Peace and Unification Studies, Seoul National University, 2017)., 115.

at high point.[12] Northern border regions where essentially autonomous and rebel groups set up administration and a flourishing trade relations with neighbouring states. Additionally, a powerful, China-backed communist insurgency spread from the north in the late 60s.[13] The military government aimed to secure unity and stability through a Buddhist and Bamar-focused nationalism and the strong presence of forces in contested regions. As a result, Aung San's idea of "Unity in Diversity" was abolished in favour of the "Burmese Way to Socialism", which included extensive counterinsurgency campaigns, rigorous isolation from external influences, religious co-optation and the establishment of a heavily centralised one-party system.[14] In the 1980s, clientilism and economic mismanagement eventually culminated in unrest and pre-democracy demonstrations. Supported by Buddhist monks these uprisings turned out so severe that they threatened the stability of the country. [15]

In 1988 General Saw Maung succeeded Ne Win in a coup d'état, supposedly to secure law and order. During the transition the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) was formed and country renamed to "Union of Myanmar".[16] The new regime continued with the Burmanisation of the country and attempted to extend its influence and presence in remote areas. The mid 90s saw a signing of various ceasefire agreements.[17] At the same time, conflict and human rights violations remained present. In combination with a bad economy, this caused an estimated 600.000 to 1 million refugees and over 1 million internally displaced people. [18] The regime proceeded to rule under martial law, but allowed the formation of parties and scheduled an election for 1990.[19] In this context, the National League for Democracy (NLD) was formed with Aung San Suu Kyi as the leading figure. Her combination of Buddhist ideals and liberal democratic thought appealed to a variety of actors, including the Buddhist community.[20] The SLORC ignored the election results of 1990, but the junta picked up previous commitment to reforms and political opening. Facing diplomatic isolation and sanctions by western countries Myanmar joined ASEAN in 1997 and the SLORC was renamed into "State Peace and Development Council" (SPDC). Seemingly pushing for democratisation, the regime

---

[12] Landé, "Ethnic Conflict, Ethnic Accommodation, and Nation-Building in Southeast Asia.", 92.

[13] Jolliffe, "Ethnic Armed Conflic and Territorial Administration in Myanmar.", 15-17.

[14] Martin Dec Smith, *Ethnic Groups in Burma : Development, Democracy and Human Rights / Martin Smith ; in Collaboration with Annie Allsebrook*, ed. Annie Allsebrook and International Anti-Slavery, Human Rights Series ; No. 8. (London: Anti-Slavery International, 1994)., 25.

[15] Ibrahim, *The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar's Hidden Genocide.*, 52-54.

[16] Ibid., 55.

[17] Jolliffe, "Ethnic Armed Conflic and Territorial Administration in Myanmar.", 18-20.

[18] Smith, *Ethnic Groups in Burma : Development, Democracy and Human Rights / Martin Smith ; in Collaboration with Annie Allsebrook.*, 30.

[19] Ibid., 27-28.

[20] Ibrahim, *The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar's Hidden Genocide.*, 55-57.

showed more interest in securing legitimacy, investments and the military's grip over the economy than promoting free market or political reform. [21] However, a "Roadmap to Democracy" was designed in 2003 and finally a new constitution scheduled democratic elections for 2010.[22] Because of the unfair advantages of the military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), the NLD boycotted the elections. Eventually the USDP secured 80% of the votes.[23] The election process was significantly rigged and did not qualify as a democratic election. De facto military-rule continued under the new premier Thein Sein until the elections in 2015.[24] The 2015 election finally saw a landslide victory by Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD. However, the first tenure of the democratic party is still ridden by ethnic conflict, a bumpy peace-process, military influence, human rights violations and hostilities towards Rohingya. After initial attacks by a Rohingya militant group, the Burmese military launched a counteroffensive in August 2017, which many western observers characterised a systematic campaign of ethnic cleansing. In the following it will be assessed how an act like this could occur in a democratising state under the leadership of a human rights activist.

1.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Democratisation is always connected to high hopes for economic growth peace and stability. However, these effects are not guaranteed to occur immediately. In the case of Myanmar, the economy and international relations improved, but at the same time, communal violence erupted in Rakhine state and culminated in a cleansing campaign with significant involvement of the military. The puzzle is what motivates, drives and prolongs the hostilities towards the Rohingya in the years after the first democratic elections. A preliminary explanation is that Democratisation amplifies pre-existing ethnic tensions as it creates an environment for elite competition. Attempting to maximise material gains or influence, elites and key societal actors potentially exploit ethnic cleavages to gain and mobilise supporters. Crucial in this context is the creation and exploitation of the anti-Muslim sentiments (see Fig. 1). It will therefore be necessary to scrutinize who the responsible actors are, how they position themselves towards Rohingya, how they create spread their narrative and which concrete

[21] Stephen McCarthy, "Burma and Asean: A Marriage of Inconvenience " in *Burma or Myanmar? The Struggle for National Identity*, ed. Lowell Dittmer (Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd., 2010)., 360.

[22] I. Holliday, *Burma Redux: Global Justice and the Quest for Political Reform in Myanmar* (Columbia University Press, 2012)., 82-83.

[23] Ibrahim, *The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar's Hidden Genocide*., 73.

[24] Holliday, *Burma Redux: Global Justice and the Quest for Political Reform in Myanmar*., 85-87.
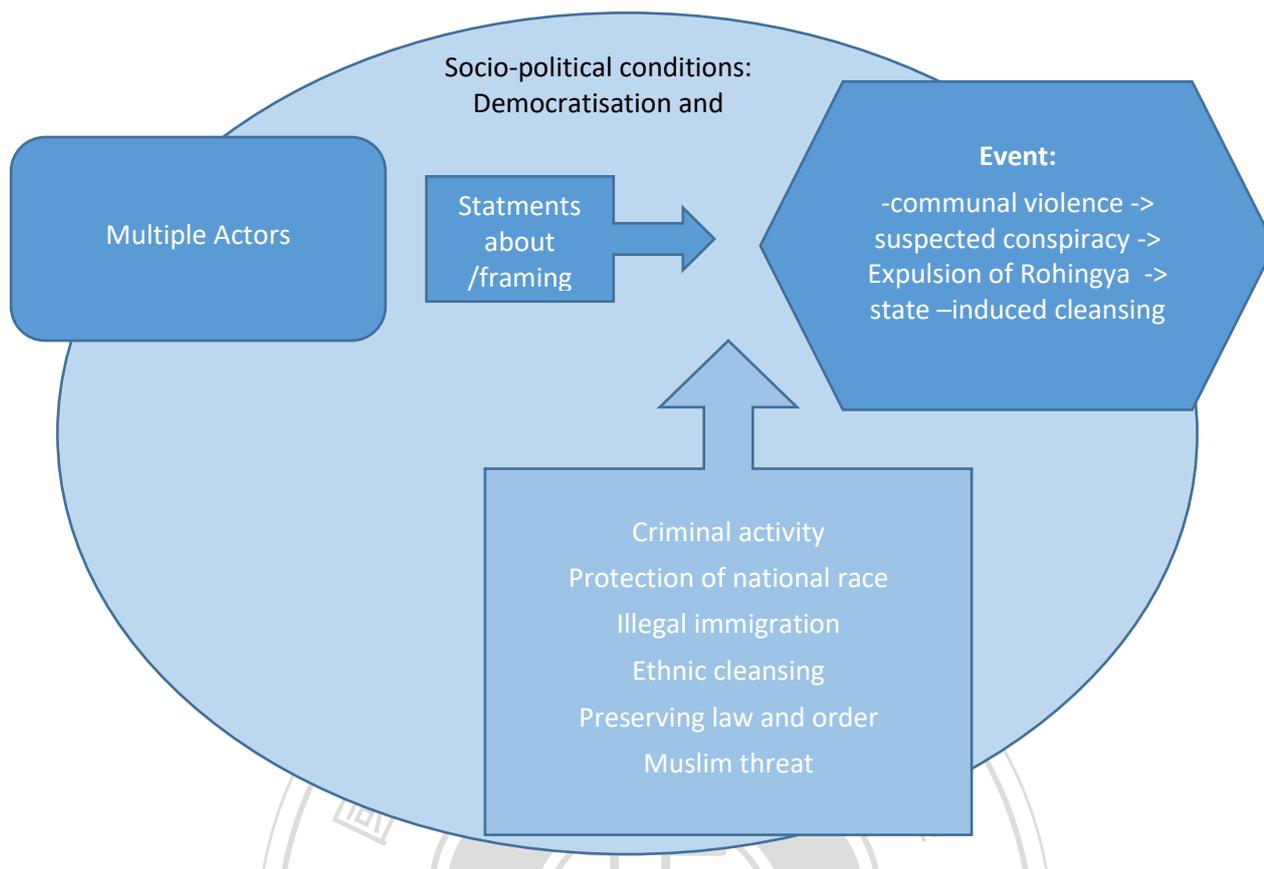
FIGURE 2 - PUZZLE

political measures they implemented. Assessing the driving forces in the conflict, it is desirable to carve out each actor's motivation. This is achieved through an analysis of existing literature on ethnic conflict and the political environment in Myanmar. Initially it will thus be necessary to identify the mechanics of ethnic conflict in general as well as the relevant actors in Myanmar and their aspirations.

Secondly, based on the identification of actors and their intents, it will be analysed what statements and justifications are given by major politicians and leaders of opinion when defending their attitude and actions in order to characterise their position. This will allow to make additional inferences about how and by whom the conflict is initiated and prolonged. It is furthermore important to pay attention to the interaction of involved actors, if they exert influence on other and if discriminatory policies were introduced in reaction to growing islamophobia.

The relevant research questions are the following:

1. What is the relevant actor's attitude towards the Rohingya?

2. How do they frame the conflict and justify their position and actions after violence had occurred?

3. Did the spread of Islamophobia translate into concrete political measures of discrimination?

1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section will outline the theories and frameworks, which will be elaborated in the literature review. This research will build on theories from different fields of study that contribute to the bigger picture of ethnic conflict. One approach, focusing on structural factors, is the analysis of a countries colonial history. Generally, countries with a previous colonial system that disenfranchised the majority group and left political structures for open political competition after de-colonialization are more likely to experience ethnic conflict. This however, only explains the structural conditions under which ethnic conflicts possibly emerge. To assess the prolongation and intensity of the conflict, additional findings on ethnic conflict have to be taken into consideration. To generally explain the outbreak of violence in unstable or democratising states the author will additionally refer to academic findings that clarify why ethnicity or poverty per se are not a generator of conflict, but a weak state, poverty and rough terrain are. This argument is expanded by studies, which demonstrate that a state during democratic transition is more prone to nationalist conflict, especially when previous ethnic divisions are prolonged. A foundation of this argumentation is the assumption that actors show rational behaviour in order to define and pursue their goals. Hence, influential actors can exploit ethnicity, if it is beneficial for them. These findings support the assumption that conflicts will emerge when opportunities for material gain or maximisation of influence are present. However, they focus on the circumstances for internal conflict and civil war and not necessarily on ethnic conflicts and the involved actors. In combination, all these findings point to an exploitation of ethnic grievances by rational, yet greedy elites, in a situation where democratisation, weak state institutions are accessible resources provide the framework and incentives.

It is therefore necessary to further assess mechanisms of ethnic conflict in due consideration to the role of identity and ethnicity, their construction, and the involved actors and their motivations. Early research in ethnic conflict treated ethnicity as a static identity that in itself carries rivalries and potential conflict with other groups. This Primordialism assumes ethnic identity is rooted in ancient and unbreakable ties between a territory, its people and their culture, language and religion. These characteristics are thus passed on by previous generations to their offspring. A change or fusion of ethnic groups is therefore impossible. In this approach conflicts stems from ancient adversaries and myths of an intended extermination through the

other, which is used to justify violence as an act of violence. This approach is considered insufficient to explain ethnic conflict, however certain actors use the motives of unbreakable blood ties and alleged myths of extermination to define and mobilise their target group.

On the other hand, the concept purposeful construction manipulation of ethnicity is considered a valid explanation for ethnic conflict. The basic assumption is that identities are neither inherited nor static, but socially constructed. From these findings, it can also be derived that national identities are purposefully constructed by certain actors or agents in order to pursue their individual goals or strengthen national coherence. This suggests that actors can intentionally manipulate ethnic groups and create adversaries when it benefits their agenda. This approach therefore does not exclude realist concepts of rational actors and maximisation of wealth and power.

The combination of realist strive, political conditions, purposeful construction of identity and existence of historic adversaries between ethnic groups is combined in the model of symbolic politics. This approach assumes a fluid definition of in-groups and out-groups through societal actors, including purposeful manipulation if is beneficial for the elite's aspirations. In this case they refer back to an already existent "myth-symbol complex" that contains a historical narrative, defines the own cultural traits and membership criteria as well as distinguishes from others. If the identity's myth-symbol complex contains strong negative presumptions towards particular adversaries, a violent clash is more likely. In contrast to the rationalist approach, the symbolist model assumes that less individual or group interests are the main driving force behind ethnic conflict but an ideological struggle for group worth. It is particularly strong if a dominant ethnic group perceives its position as threatened by a different ethnicity. Finally, for ethnic conflict to break out, political opportunity must be present. This means that actors must have the possibility to mobilize their supporters without having to fear repression. An access to state institutions greatly increases this opportunity.

As ethnic conflicts take place in various political conditions and under reference to a variety of motives, it is difficult to design a "one-fits-all theory". The case of Myanmar combines a multitude of mechanisms, opportunities and conditions, created by previous colonialization and recent democratisation. Elite behaviour in the country is equally motivated by realist interests as they exploit ancient myths and hatreds. Hence, the comprehensive framework of symbolic politics will be considered as the primary theoretical framework for this research.

In this research, "Muslim" and "Rohingya" are used virtually synonymously. If not indicated otherwise, the use of the term Muslims, applies to Rohingya in Myanmar in particular. If another Muslim group, such as the Kaman, is addressed it will be clearly indicated. The sentiments in Myanmar are a based on an anti-Muslim narrative, which as a whole is intended to discredit Rohingya. The term Muslim is used in this research for three reasons: The term Rohingya, in its contemporary form, is contested and presumably a modern political construct. Thus, when discussing aversions that are rooted in the country's socio-historic context, the broader term "Muslim" will be used as a broad self-identification as Rohingya has not been salient prior to Muslim nationalist movements in Myanmar in the50s and 60s. Secondly, a great deal of anti-Rohingya sentiment is related to fears of a Muslim conspiracy, jihad or global and local terrorism. Thus, a great deal of rhetoric revolves around alleged Muslim threat, when it is deployed to target Rohingya in particular. Thirdly, relevant actors avoid using the term Rohingya. Consequently, they use the term Muslim, but mostly intend to refer to Rohingya. A similar observation can be made when looking at the word "Bengali". As most relevant Burmese actors avoid using the term Rohingya, they use "Bengali" when referring to the said Muslim minority. This makes it difficult to differentiate in what cases they exclusively address Rohingya or people from Bangladesh. In most cases, it can be assumed that this inaccuracy is intended and serves to label the Rohingya as foreign interlopers in the first place.

1.4 RESEARCH METHODS

The thesis will analyse the circumstances and developments in a given country. Consequently, it is a single case study. The foundation of this research will be oriented towards process tracing. This method is suitable to explain causal relations regarding the emergence of social phenomena from diagnostic pieces of evidence. Process tracing can either explain data gathered through quantitative studies, test or alter existing theories or generate and test new hypotheses. It pays special attention to the temporal sequence of events that lead to an observed outcome.[25] The basic focus of this research is the causalities for the hostilities towards the Rohingya. Point of departure is the emergence of ethnic grievances and how they facilitate ethnic conflict. Therefore, the existence of grievances can be considered the observation while ethnic violence is the outcome. The causal mechanism that links both together is object of this study.

---

[25] James Mahoney, "The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in the Social Sciences," *Sociological Methods & Research* 41, no. 4 (2012)., 570-573.

The tested theory of symbolic politics assumes that in a democratising society grievances are exploited by calculating elites who deliberately exacerbate tensions to gain support. Since individuals will be considered agents of identity-construction, an identity that in turn fuels the conflict, this research can be considered actor based, dealing with actors at middle and top-level.[26]

This requires an initial identification of the relevant elites, their motivations as well as an evaluation of the conflict. If the existing theories are not sufficient to explain the causalities and mechanisms of this specific case, it will be necessary to develop own explanations for non-systematic, case specific mechanisms. Technically this is switching between a theory-testing approach of process tracing and explaining outcome process tracing.[27]

To assess if elites in Myanmar can be characterised as hawkish, insofar as they exploit existing grievances, the statements given by major societal actors before and after violent incidents will be analysed. It is important to analyse the character of statements and how the conflict is framed, while also integrate public statements the political context. Two mechanisms are plausible. Public pressure could coerce political actors to adopt a xenophobic stance and deploy corresponding rhetoric and policies. Alternatively could political actors be the source of inflammatory speech that mobilises an initially neutral public. Additionally, this research intends to characterise and compare the position of key societal actors towards the Rohingya and the hostilities directed towards them. This will help outline the origins of the anti-Muslim narrative and its impact on the prolongation of the conflict. In this regard, it is also necessary to look at concrete actions undertaken by actors. This serves to analyse if growing antipathy towards Muslims allowed societal actors to pressure and lobby politicians and, in turn, if politics responded to societal pressures by introducing discriminatory policies or campaigns against Rohingya. Lastly, attention should be directed if political elites purposeful advance ethnic cleavages to mobilise supporters.

This research uses the term "societal" to point out that the analysed actors are part of the same society, a network of people, on different levels. Their position reaches from religious actors with close relations to the local population to the political and military leadership that mostly operates within its own realm. All of them, in their own way, have an influence on the public discourse and the perception of Rohingya. The term societal is furthermore used to avoid

---

[26] "Conflict Analysis," in *Conflict-Sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peace Building: Tools for Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment*, ed. Colin Roth (London: 2004)., 2-3.

[27] Melanie Punton and Katharina Welle, "Applying Process Tracing in Five Steps," *Centre for Development Impact Practice Paper* April 2015, no. 10 (2015).

confusion with the term social actor, which is a term used in sociology. In short social actor describes an individual that, based on free will and individual capabilities, interprets action and human interaction and reacts accordingly. In particular cases the social actor can be bound by its (self-) ascribed role, or try to change values or perceptions of a given group.

This thesis will draw information from primary and secondary sources, focusing on major actors of the Burmese society with considerable influence on public opinion. Based on this, key actors the position of major institutions in the Burmese society will be deducted. Three major levels can be identified: the elected central government, in which positions of the National League for Democracy, USDP and the Military have to be differentiated, the local Rakhine government represented by the local parties and their representatives, and the societal level on which Buddhist groups oppose Muslims. This research will focus on a few major actors. If the available data is not sufficient, additional important representatives of these groups will be included. Among the prioritized persons are Aung San Suu Kyi and Thein Sein as representatives of the Burmese state. To assess the position of the Burmese military, the Tatmadaw, the statements of its Senior General Min Aung Hlaing will be added. Secondly, Ashin Wirathu, who is leader of the 969 movement and vice chairman of the Patriotic Association of Myanmar (Ma Ba Tha) which are spearheading the anti-Muslim campaign, will be included in the analysis. On the local level, official statements of the Arakan National Party (AND) and the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party (RNDP), respectively their members will be collected and analysed. Rohingya leaders are responsible for publishing several works and articles, arguing for their full integration into Burmese society. However, they are mostly ignored or rejected in Burmese media and thus have no significant impact on construction of identity in Myanmar. Their argumentation furthermore relies on an interpretation of history and intention to prove Rohingya nativity in Myanmar. Therefore, their influence on sparking ethnic hatred is marginal, as they generally do not criticise other ethnic group's positions or status in society. Most crucial is indeed the rendering of Rohingya as immigrants or even a threat to the state, which is mostly done on the side of Burmese Buddhists through various speech acts or publications.

This part of the research can be characterised as discourse analysis. It follows the logic of critical discourse analysis, which assumes that "language use contributes the (re)production of social life – then, logically, discourse must play a part in producing and reproducing social inequalities."[28] In sum, this research assumes that ethnic tensions are amplified through the statements given by opinion leaders in the Burmese society. Consequently, the elites can be identified as a major cause for its prolongation. To assess the attitude of these leaders and to evaluate if it fits the theory of symbolic politics their statements directed at the public audience will be analysed.
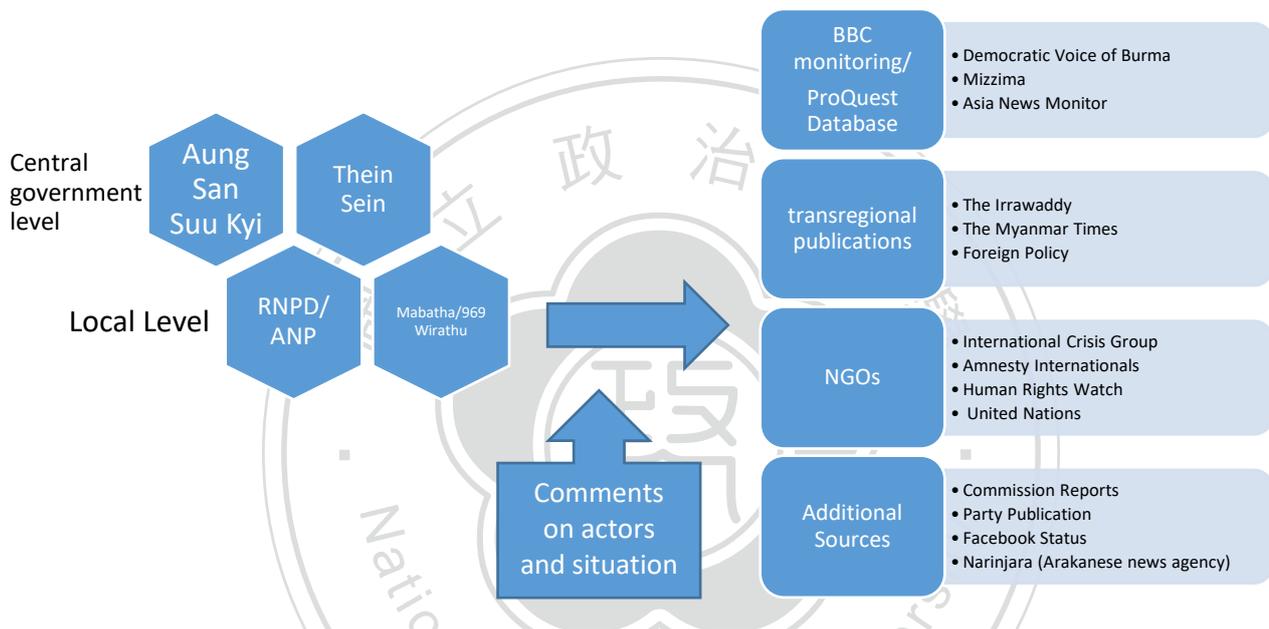
FIGURE 3- RESOURCES

This research will primarily rely on the service of BBC monitoring and ProQuest, which organise local media content in a databank that is updated daily. Furthermore, The Irrawaddy and The Myanmar Times, newspapers by the Burmese expat-community, will serve as a resource for the latest articles and interviews. A Rakhine-based news agency, Narinjara, will also be included. Additionally, information can be extracted from UN reports or NGOs such as Amnesty International and the International Crisis Group. Variety and amount of resources will be crucial. Further information will be gained from interviews or speeches published in newspapers, government press releases, or in the form of materials on the internet. This research will therefore also include available blogs, Facebook status and interviews published on YouTube if they provide relevant information or interviews. However, it will be vital to take

---

[28] John E Richardson, "Analysing Newspapers," *An approach from critical discourse analysis New York: Palgrave Macmillan* (2007)., 26.

credibility and possible partisanship into consideration. As far as available, official party statutes or programs will be included in the analysis as well (see Figure 3).

Priority of the analysis will be justifications and explanations that are given to characterise Rohingya and explain or justify the stigmatisation and expulsion of the Rohingya and the nature of contestations in Rakhine State, preferably in chronological proximity to outbursts of hostilities or violence or on important occasions with a big audience. The thesis will be concerned with developments since the elections of 2010 in which multiple political and societal forces competed for influence and interpretational sovereignty. Especially the latest events, starting with assaults by the ARSA, acts of retaliation and the resulting exodus of thousands of Rohingya in August 2017, will be scrutinized. This, on the one hand, allows drawing inferences about the relation between democratisation, the development of the ethnic conflict in the context of state building and the position of important public figures. On the other hand, it provides uniqueness to the research and makes it stand out from previous works, since it draws inferences from a recent event of considerable size and severity.

After having summed up the research on ethnic conflict and the relevant information on the history and development of the country towards a democracy, as well as the relevant actors, the analytical part of this research begins with the inauguration of Myanmar's first democratically elected president in 2011. The country's recent development can be roughly separated into four parts. Firstly, an initial stage of democratisation during the USDP tenure, where new freedoms allowed for the growth of suspicions towards Rohingya and culminated in discriminatory policies. Secondly, a phase of worsening rhetoric and simultaneous failure to counteract in the first few months after Suu Kyi's inauguration in February 2016. Eventually the attacks of ARSA in October 2016 initiated a third period, characterised by increasing securitisation of Rohingya issues as a matter of terrorism. This eventually culminated in the events of August and September 2017 where a humanitarian crisis was caused by the Tatmadaw's rigorous anti-terrorism offensive. In this context, the Burmese government officially declared ARSA a terrorist organisation, confirming the narrative of the many chauvinist individuals. This, and the fact that in the aftermath of the military operations a majority of Rohingya fled the country marks a final stage. We thus have to consider the state of affairs prior to August 2017 as events during democratisation, while after the 2017 conflict the term crisis is adequate. This research tracks public statements of relevant actors from 2011 to the aftermath of the 2017 crisis. Some relevant expressions, within half a year after August 2017 are included to scrutinise if actors have changed their position after Rohingya have been

- 14 -

dispersed or if they solidify the portrayal of expansionist Muslims to obstruct a repatriation of Rohingya.

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

To assess ethnic conflicts, a plethora of approaches has been worked out. These can generally be divided into explanations focusing on opportunities provided by political and economic circumstances, and alternatively on personal motivations such as greed or grievances. Consensus is that greed or existing grievances, in the form of ethnic hatreds, is not a sufficient explanation for the existence of ethnic conflicts. Rational actors can exploit aversions, but the conditions have to allow this to happen. An environment for ethnic conflict can arise during political transition, when lack of institutional strength and sudden emergence of new actors benefit unregulated competition. In most cases, manipulating elites are a driving force by purposefully creating concepts of enemies under reference to ethnicity and connected myths, symbols and aspirations. This presupposes that ethnic and national identities are products of social construction. The following section will sum up the relevant literature and give an overview over discrimination, xenophobia and the influence of political transition in Myanmar as well as of the relevant actors.

2.1 ETHNICITY AS A DRIVER OF CONFLICT

Ethnicity or the co-existence of differing ethnic groups is not a sufficient explanation for the emergence of violent conflict. Ethnic differences can exacerbate existing conflicts, but can also have opposing effects. Beissinger (2008) finds that ethnic diversity and strong ethnic nationalism can even have a positive impact on nation building and democratisation, if leaders manage to integrate ethnic diversity into the national identity of the state.[29] Kaufman (2010) remarks that ethnic conflict does not necessarily have to be carried out violently. In its non-violent from, ethnic conflict includes minorities struggling to get their language or religion officially recognized, the banning of specific food or freedom to practice religious rituals. Non-violent ethnic conflict can also revolve around economic issues. Often people have tighter business relations with individuals of similar religion or ethnicity. This is not intentional or aimed at excluding others but based on a greater quantity of interactions with people of a similar social status. Nevertheless, prejudices, grievances and envy of the excluded can emerge. In the worst case, this diffuses into the state-level and causes institutionalized discrimination or racism.

---

[29] Mark R Beissinger, "A New Look at Ethnicity and Democratization," *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 3 (2008).

The potential for violent conflict, in Kaufman's explanation, increases if one of the involved groups upholds and exploits political dominance.[30]

When it comes to violent conflict, all cases can be analysed through different prisms. Some emphasize opportunities for material or political gain or conditions to uphold armed resistance, while others prioritise the deliberate construction and instrumentalization of ethnic identity. The former focuses on structural conditions that allow rebel groups to emerge. The latter focus on the dynamics of how ethnicity is exploited by certain actors. Social construction of ethnic identities plays a vital part the latter analyses. It generally rejects that a static ancient identity or hatred is the driver of a conflict. Universal findings hereby originate in social psychology and instrumentalism.

Social psychology concludes that "when the group's myth-symbol complex points to the other group as an enemy, its members will be predisposed to be hostile to the other group. Politicians will then be able to appeal to symbols of past hostility."[31] If at the same time, the group feels an existential threat originating from the other group, measures against the other group can be labelled as "self-defence".[32] These findings are supplemented by the instrumentalist school, which assumes that ethnicity is exploited by elites to influence competition over tangible goods in their favour. Hence, ethnicity itself is not the generator of conflict. Elites manipulate identity in order to purposefully deceive the public and gain support for their cause. In this strategy, security fears are often exploited or artificially generated, creating sentiments of "us against them". In addition to conflicts over tangible interests, a contest for status or group worth is often involved in which groups desire to express their claim for political dominance or a higher social status.[33] Elite manipulation of identity or ethnicity does not occur in a political vacuum. Changes in the political system or even the historic background may have an effect and have to be taken into consideration. Despite relying mostly on the mechanisms of social construction, this thesis will include an overview over other explanations in the following.

2.1.1 HISTORICAL EXPLANATIONS

Each individual internal conflict is embedded in a local cultural, economic and historical context. Case-specific historic analysis can therefore provide valid insights on unique drivers

---

[30] Stuart J Kaufman, "Ethnicity as a Generator of Conflict," *Routledge handbook of ethnic conflict* 91 (2010).
[31] Ibid., 99.
[32] Ibid., 98-99.
[33] Ibid., 100-101.

and characteristics of the conflict. For Myanmar, as a former British colony, it is therefore reasonable to bear in mind mechanisms of conflict in postcolonial states.

In general, post-colonial states often base their legitimacy on the promise of economic development. If this developmental state fails, it loses its monopoly over power and gives rise to intrastate violence. It is not necessary that a state fails entirely. It suffices if economic redistribution does not benefit minority groups or if the monopoly of power is concentrated at the dominant group. Consequently, the state loses its legitimacy among a certain group who then refers back to take political or rebellious action. In this context, the ethnic diversity is the precondition for unequal treatment, but in itself it is not a generator of conflict. Only if a group experiences a discrimination based on ethnic criteria, a conflict emerges. If a state provides an institutional framework for negotiation, ethnic conflict can be reduced, yet this is unlikely in weak, freshly democratising or discriminatory states.[34]

For Southeast Asia, Wee and Lang identify the issue of "new states and old communities". This means national borders do not overlap with pre-existing territories of ethnic groups causing the merging of different ethnicities and power-aspirations under one governmental unit. In multi-national states, different groups eventually try to secure their influence or hold on power, from which one usually rises as the dominant one. The resulting preferential treatment of the own group deepens ethnic cleavages. Additionally institutions for conflict resolution are absent and the promise of economic development cannot be maintained. Hence, violence is likely to occur among ethnic lines.[35] This implies that historical developments and demographic composition are one factor in the build-up of ethnic conflict. However, the existence of different ethnicities is not the root cause behind the conflict. It is rather unregulated competition and lacking state abilities to provide mechanisms for dialogue conflict resolution. In other words, an opportunity for groups to compete and mobilise along ethnic lines has to be present.

Other findings show that states with a British colonial history have a higher probability of experiencing ethnic conflict. Blanton, Mason and Athow reject a grievance-based explanation and focus in their analysis on different colonial systems of colonial administration. The authors argue, "Grievances are not likely to result in collective violence unless counter-elites and mobilizing structures are available to persuade aggrieved individuals to participate in

---

[34] Vivienne Wee and Graeme Lang, "Ethnic Violence and the Loss of State Legitimacy: Burma and Indonesia in a Context of Post-Colonial Developmentalism," *Perspectives on Contemporary Ethnic Conflict: Primal Violence Or the Politics of Conviction?* (2006)., 50-54.
[35] Ibid., 67-68.

the collective action."[36] They are consequently a catalyst when it comes to mobilizing members of ethnic groups, but not a sufficient explanation. Crucial is the creation of a framework in which mobilisation can occur. This can be traced back to styles of colonial rule. The authors differentiate between an unranked and a ranked system of ethnic stratification. The ranked system, typically set up by French colonial rulers, revolved around cultural administration and a centralisation of the administration. This allowed one ethnic group to gain superiority while depriving others of their means to mobilise. After independence, the group that was previously in charge is able to preserve dominance in administration without having to compete with other (previously disenfranchised) groups.[37] This enables them to secure hegemony and suppress other ethnic groups by impeding their potential to mobilise and their "ability to pursue political grievances through conventional political channels."[38] The British colonial rule however, was based on an unranked system in which a horizontal division of labour based on culture or ethnicity did not exist. Consequently, different ethnic groups ended up in competition for influential posts.[39] After independence, states with former British colonial rule, witnessed a perpetuation of ethnic conflict, which was amplified by the absence of the regulating power of the colonial ruler and the reinforcement of already existing hierarchies. Since these hierarchies provide the foundation for ethnic mobilisation, conflict along ethnic lines was and is more likely in countries that belonged to the British Empire.[40]

During their rule over Burma, the British firstly allowed immigration of Hindu and Muslim-Indian workers into Burma, but also granted relative autonomy to ethnic groups in the peripheral regions.[41] Additionally they facilitated the migration of trained Indian administrative staff into Burma, who quickly became an important group in the country's political institutions. Consequently, the Bamar majority saw themselves as a disadvantaged group in its own country, exposed to foreign rule. Landé points out that after independence, the risk of conflict between ethnic communities is great when the largest and political powerful unit has occupied low position during colonial rule. After regaining dominance this group will use power to change conditions in its own favour.[42] This was certainly the case in Myanmar. The underlying explanation for conflict is therefore not the channels for mobilisation, but the regained

---

[36] Robert Blanton, T David Mason, and Brian Athow, "Colonial Style and Post-Colonial Ethnic Conflict in Africa," *Journal of Peace Research* 38, no. 4 (2001)., 474.

[37] Ibid., 478-480.

[38] Ibid., 488.

[39] Ibid., 476.

[40] Ibid., 481.

[41] Landé, "Ethnic Conflict, Ethnic Accommodation, and Nation-Building in Southeast Asia.", 92, 100-101.

[42] Ibid.,101-103.

dominance of a native ethnicity, that attempts to extend its influence into peripheral regions. After independence, a growing nationalism and aspired Burmanisation of the country not only turned against Indian and Muslims, but also led to conflict between the centre and the periphery, hence the dominant Buddhist Bamar and various minorities. The British colonial system of "divide and rule" consequently created an arena in which various ethnicities could compete in after independence, but where one group clearly dominated the others.[43]

These findings are generally compatibly with findings on opportunity and democratisation, which presume that conflicts will arise, when the conditions allow it. Democratisation, in this context, provides the structural framework for newly arising groups to compete for power, while lacking the capacity to reconcile due to its underdeveloped institutions.

2.1.2 OPPORTUNITY MODELS

Structural approaches analyse ethnic conflicts through observable factors that facilitate uprising or conflicts. Next to materialistic opportunities and existing grievances, ethnicity is treated as independent variable. In general, the findings confirm that ethnicity is not the driving force behind conflict, but the intention of acting elites is. With the intention to maximise gains or power, actors can exploit or reinforce existing grievances for their own purpose. But most important is the socio-political framework and country's geography that facilitates the formation of insurgent groups.

Collier and Hoeffler frame the outbreak of civil war as connected to the simultaneous existence of *opportunities* and *motives*. *Motives* usually comprise a combination of (possibly misperceived) grievances and greed. [44] These include ethnic or religious hatred, political repression, political exclusion and economic inequality. [45] The conditions under which a rebellion takes place are summarised as *opportunities*. Opportunities include economic factors such as funding by a hostile government or a diaspora, possible resource extraction, per-capita income, male secondary schooling and growth rate and weak governments as well as difficult terrain.[46] The authors conclude that motives alone are not a sufficient explanation for ethnic conflict – the structural factors creating opportunities are crucial. The authors note that a

---

[43] Ibid., 108-109.

[44] Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War," *Oxford economic papers* 56, no. 4 (2004)., 564-565.

[45] Ibid. 570-572.

[46] Ibid., 565-569.

negative impact of ethnic diversity only emerges when a certain group exerts dominance over others.[47] The findings support the thesis of opportunity and greed-driven conflict and reject the influence of grievances and ethnic diversity. From the motives, only repression and ethnic dominance increase the conflict risk.[48]

Collier, Hoeffler and Rohner later developed a "feasibility hypothesis" from the Machiavelli Theorem that no profitable opportunity would go unused.[49] The thesis says that, "Factors that are important for the financial and military feasibility of rebellion but are unimportant for motivation decisively increase the risk of civil war."[50] Thus personal greed alone is not a sufficient explanation for the outbreak of internal conflicts. Among the factors that contribute to a higher risk of civil war are GDP, commodity export, previous conflict and social fractionalisation, but also previous colonial history, population of young men and mountainous areas. GDP directly translates into a state's capacity to control uprisings as well as the creation of labour, which both diminish the pool of potential rebels. Colonial history, number of young men and mountainous areas are confirmed as factors that increase the likelihood of conflict. The authors furthermore confirm that religious and ethnic fractionalisations increase the risk of armed conflict.[51] The authors conclude with a positive evaluation of the feasibility thesis. "where a rebellion is feasible it will occur."[52] While these findings allow to generally evaluate the risk of ethnic rebellion in a given country, they primarily serve to explain large-scale armed resistance and not communal violence and discrimination as in Myanmar.

An additional focus of attention on structural factors to the impact of political transition and democratisation on rebellion and ethnic uprising. Related research confirms that not ethnicity or hatred per se generate conflict. Instead, the opportunities that emerge during political changes facilitate rebellion. Examining insurgencies and civil war, Fearon and Laitin (2003) demonstrated that the factors that favour civil and internal wars in the 90s were neither economic inequality nor ethnic or religious diversity but factors such as weak governments and authorities which allowed insurgent groups to retreat from governmental influence into uncontrolled and remote regions. Often conflicts were protracted from former eras and changes in the national political system allowed latent conflicts to turn into violent uprisings. Regularly

---

[47] Ibid., 588.

[48] Ibid., 576f, 581.

[49] Paul Collier, Anke Hoeffler, and Dominic Rohner, "Beyond Greed and Grievance: Feasibility and Civil War," *oxford Economic papers* 61, no. 1 (2009)., 3.

[50] Ibid., 3.

[51] Ibid., 12-14.

[52] Ibid., 24.

financial shortcomings on the side of the state play an important role. Lacking funds to effectively supress or deter uprisings either through effective institutions or police left states prone to internal conflicts. In parallel, life as an insurgent, with all risks and benefits calculated became more attractive than that of a peaceful civilian which increased the number of participants.[53]

Mansfield and Snyder (2002) build on their previous findings that states which are undergoing democratic transition are more likely to participate in external wars than regimes that remained unchanged or changed in autocratic direction.[54] After a broad analysis of a variety of data and variables they conclude that

> Transitions to more pluralistic political systems coincided with the rise of national independence movements, spurring separatist warfare that often spilled across international borders. In other cases, transitional regimes clashed in interstate warfare.[55]

In this research the authors focus on the conditions under which democratisation stimulates hostilities. They find that the outbreak of nationalist movements is caused by insufficient institutional control-mechanisms which are exploited by reckless elites that use nationalist appeals in order to rally for their cause. Democratising state in general show a high intensity of competition among a multitude of social groups, interests and actors. Since party-system, legislature, courts and media in democratising states are often in their infancy and thus easy to manipulate, the appeal to nationalist sentiments in order to gain support is a viable strategy for elites. This often contains the creation of a perceived threat to the nation that justifies the exclusion of certain groups from political participation. Due to the weakness of institutions and media as well as a general lack of information, little mechanisms to punish or hold perpetrators accountable exist. Thus, nationalist mobilisation continues unobstructed and in the worst case turns to violence against perceived alien element within the state.

The thesis that democratisation implies mass mobilisation on behalf of elites, who purposefully construct foes, is confirmed by the findings of Cederman, Hug and Krebs. The authors add that violence might be an attempt of a new regime to silence opposition. According to their analysis, both democratisation and autocratization increase the probability of violence.[56] The authors furthermore confirm that higher GDP is positively related to the absence of

---

[53] James D Fearon and David D Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American political science review* 97, no. 1 (2003).

[54] Edward D Mansfield and Jack Snyder, "Democratic Transitions, Institutional Strength, and War," *International Organization* 56, no. 2 (2002).

[55] Ibid., 297.

[56] Lars-Erik Cederman, Simon Hug, and Lutz F Krebs, "Democratization and Civil War: Empirical Evidence," *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 4 (2010)., 379.

- 22 -

conflict.[57] This stems from the observations that a higher GDP on the one hand creates job opportunities and on the other hand enables the state to supress uprisings. Both diminish the number of potential rebels.

These findings help understanding the long history of internal conflicts and insurgencies in Myanmar but are not sufficient to analyse the hostilities toward the Rohingya. These cannot be approached through the prism of nationalist uprisings, full-scale civil war or guerrilla warfare. The previous cases might show a similar exploitation of identity and scapegoating as the Rohingya conflict, but state discrimination, communal violence and eventually state-induced cleansing best describe the latter case. Thus, theories of ethnic conflict and ethnic cleansing will have to be taken into consideration.

Mann offers a broad approach to ethnic cleansing. His definition of ethnic cleansing does not focus on forced relocation or killings. He suggests a framework ranging from assimilation, coercion, segregation and discrimination to repression, displacement and killing. All of these factors could in some way contribute to a physical disappearance of an ethnic group or the vanishing of its distinctive culture. His theses suggest that ethnic tensions and cleansing are a modern phenomenon, which occurs when in democratising countries ethnicity trumps class as the main form of social stratification. A high risk of murderous cleansing occurs when competing groups voice legitimate claims on contested territories. This is only exacerbated when the political environment is unstable, the state is highly fractionalised or when discrimination along ethnic lines occurs.[58]

A few of his theses strikingly resemble the contemporary situation in Myanmar. Mann observed that Murderous cleansing occurs in two scenarios. Firstly when "the less powerful side is bolstered to fight rather than to submit by believing that aid will be forthcoming from outside"[59] and secondly when "the stronger side believes it has such overwhelming military power and ideological legitimacy that it can force through its own cleansed state at little physical or moral risk to itself."[60] The former perfectly describes the tactics of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, who launched attacks in order to draw international attention and point out military misconduct and political discrimination. The latter case is suitable to describe the latest events of Rohingya expulsion in Myanmar, spearheaded by the Burmese military. Mann furthermore remarks that murderous cleansing is seldom the original intent of

---

[57] Ibid., 385-387.

[58] Michael Mann, *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (Cambridge University Press, 2005)., 1-18.

[59] Ibid., 6.

[60] Ibid., 6.

perpetrators. It is rather a last resort after previous, more subtle measures failed. Lastly, he points out, that among radical elites, militant bands and the broad public no single actor can be blamed. They are all in a relation of mutual influencing where power, pressure and ideology are exercised and transferred top-down and bottom-up in between elites and the constituency, as well as coercively sideways by paramilitaries.[61]

Thus, two explanatory mechanisms of opportunity models can be derived. One focuses on the state and how the political framework provides incentives to exploit ethnic grievances in a situation where multiple ethnic groups strive for dominance. The other one looks at economic factors that can benefit a rebellion and the satisfaction of personal desire, as well as at the related state capacity to supress such behaviour. What they have in common, is that they aim to explain the emergence of insurgent groups that rebel against the state or ethnic violence between two equally matched groups that strive for political dominance or revenue. Democratisation creates opportunities, but more important, it also facilitates rather unregulated competition. If ethnicity and discrimination are involved, conflict can develop into the most extreme form of ethnic cleansing. The question of how conflicting groups mobilise along ethnic lines and for what reason can not be answered through these approaches. In order to do so it is necessary to turn to individual motivation and the existence of grievances.

2.1.3 MOTIVES AND MOTIVATION

Motivation-based explanation focus on the behaviour and intentions of political and societal elites as well as the general population. Regan and Norton assume that leaders, as well as followers, act rationally and oriented towards future political or materialistic gains. Grievances, in this context, are not constructed but a pre-existing core of motivation, to which leaders can refer back to. These grievances are born out of deprivation and situations of ethnic inequality. Distinct groups will perceive problems as shared within the own group, which bolsters solidarity and simultaneously facilitates differentiation and suspicion towards others. Elites will make use of these mechanisms to improve their future prospects. On behalf of the population, mass-participation in a rebel movement is subject to a cost-benefit analysis and a consideration of the possibilities of being detected.[62] This cost-benefit analysis is massively influenced by state capabilities and repression. A capable state can suppress uprisings.

---

[61] Ibid., 7-9.

[62] Patrick M Regan and Daniel Norton, "Greed, Grievance, and Mobilization in Civil Wars," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 3 (2005)., 323-325.

Supporting previous findings, Reagan's and Norton's research shows that a shift towards a moderately democratic system increases the probability of rebellion. [63] In turn, less discrimination against minority groups decreases the chance of rebellions significantly. Thus we can assume that discrimination and disenfranchisement cause aversion toward the suppressor and lead to conflict.

These *Grievance-based* explanations focus on individual discontent and frustration that emerge out of (perceived) deprivation but not from ethnic aversions. Grievances instead contribute to hardening group identities and cause political violence that aims at altering sources inequality. Thus, evidence for conflict-inducing effects of unequal access to political power exists. [64] Taydas, Enia and James suggest that opportunity and grievance are not mutually exclusive and competing explanations. Opportunity alone can explain the context that makes collective action possible, but does explain why people take up arms. Grievance provides incentives for people to take collective action but it fails to explain the degree of intensity, or when discontent turns into violence. Furthermore, many other factors such as corruption cannot be attributed to either grievance opportunity, since they cause inequality and resulting grievance but also impede a states' economic development. [65] Eventually civil conflict emerges in a set of conditions. Incentives and opportunities to overcome the collective action problem have to be present, as well motivations that cause people to organise.

A refined framework to assess personal motivation is provided by Frances Stewart. She suggested that a crucial factor in ethnic conflicts are horizontal inequalities. Existence of different ethnic groups or even purposeful distinction are not the driving factors in ethnic conflict, as numerous quantitative studies show. To a greater degree, horizontal inequalities between the groups that lead to a spiral of division, mobilization and conflict. Inequalities can occur as part of economy or political participation but also manifest themselves in social inequalities, such as access to education or healthcare, and freedoms to practice one's culture. Perceived inequalities in these fields will lead to grievances and cause the disenfranchised group to mobilize. If mechanisms of accommodation or dialogue are missing, a conflict is more likely. [66] Economic inequalities and unequal access to political decision-making increase the likelihood of conflict. These factors especially affect populations on both ends of the spectrum

---

[63] Ibid., 332.

[64] Zeynep Taydas, Jason Enia, and Patrick James, "Why Do Civil Wars Occur? Another Look at the Theoretical Dichotomy of Opportunity Versus Grievance," *Review of international Studies* 37, no. 5 (2011)., 2631-2633.

[65] Ibid., 2367-2340.

[66] Frances Stewart, "Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: An Introduction and Some Hypotheses," in *Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict. Conflict, Inequality and Ethnicity*, ed. Frances Stewart (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

of inequality. In other words, "the predicted probability of conflict increases as the group`s wealth deviates from the country average."[67]

According to Wucherpfenning et, al., ethnic outbidding is especially existent semi-democracies, due to a prevailing security dilemma which hampers credible commitments and benefits pre-emptive violence.[68] Dominant groups aim "to secure their political, cultural, and economic interests by selectively excluding parts of the population from access to valuable political and economic goods on ethnic grounds"[69], which in turn causes a strong reaction from the discriminated ones based on inequality and grievances. If discrimination revolves around ethnicity, it is ascriptive in nature and usually accompanied by a struggle for subjective worth. Clearly defined ethnic groups facilitate the accumulation of grievances within a specific group through a shared sense of suffering. This leads to an increase in solidarity and is one of the reasons why ethnic conflicts usually endure. The ascription of belonging to an ethnic group additionally expands the pool of potential fighters, which causes rebel movements to endure.[70] The authors show a correlation between prolonged conflict and ethnicity. Ethnicity, in this case, is not interpreted as a factor that helps to overcome the collective action problem. Instead, the combination of ascriptive ethnicity and state exclusion is considered the main driver, since it strengthens groups solidarity and enlarges the pool of fighters, which allows rebels to keep up their resistance.[71]

Motivational approaches are supplementary to opportunity models. They assume a rational behaviour of elites and population. Grievances are found to be rooted in inequality and repression, not in ethnicity. However, they can lead to hardened group identities and a spiral of division and mobilisation. In these cases, weak democracies, due to their lacking ability to reconcile, enable elites to instrumentalize ethnic cleavages. Eventually, the core of the conflict is the status of a given group in society, which it tries to improve, which in turn can be exploited by elites to mobilise in their favour. However, the explanations lack a model to describe how actors exploit ethnicity and spread aversion for their own benefit. This behaviour is the core of constructivist explanations to ethnic conflict.

---

[67] Lars-Erik Cederman, Nils B Weidmann, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch, "Horizontal Inequalities and Ethnonationalist Civil War: A Global Comparison," *American Political Science Review* 105, no. 3 (2011)., 487.
[68] Julian Wucherpfennig et al., "Ethnicity, the State, and the Duration of Civil War," *World Politics* 64, no. 1 (2012)., 81f, 85-87.
[69] Ibid., 84.
[70] Ibid., 89-91.
[71] Ibid., 101-102.

2.1.4 THE CONSTRUCTIVIST APPROACH TO ETHNICITY IN CONFLICTS

Because identities, possibly built around ethnic lines, bear a risk to be utilised for purposeful exclusion, nationalism or mobilisation, the process of identity construction is a crucial factor in assessing ethnic conflict. This approach rejects the concept of static identities that contain grievances in itself. Constructivist approaches identify identity construction as a modern phenomenon, related to the emergence of nations and states.

An outdated argumentation, Primordialism, considers ethnic groups as defined through their language, religion and ties to a territory. These identities are considered as unchangeably tied to a territory and its people and passed on through blood and kinship. The historical narrative of the groups is filled with glorifications and contains a heroic emergence as well as myths about hostile adversaries. Conflict arises when a state's borders do not represent the territory of an ethnic group or when multiple groups compete for the same territory.[72] In this "clash of cultures", irreconcilable cultural differences cause fears of extermination or forced assimilation, which eventually justify pre-emptive violence.[73] Yet, the claims that ethnic and national identities predate states has not been confirmed and the fact that identities are passed on through kinship has by all means been rejected. However, this does not exclude that certain actors might refer to primordial motives such as blood-relationships or ancient hatreds to rally for their cause.

Social construction of ethnicity in the first instance rejects primordialism and the idea that ethnic identity is hereditary. The underlying assumption of a constructivist approach is that ethnic and national identities are socially constructed as modern nation states formed. Benedict Anderson considers it an exclusively modern concept, rooted in the spread of a common language through print products. This allowed members of his so-called "imagined communities" to identify and associate with other members of society who share the traits. Sense of community and common history then translated into the will to form a sovereign state.[74] But despite the power to unite people, ethnicity and identity are a powerful tool for nationalist mobilisation and exclusion of others who are not part of the self-defined nation.

Anthony Smith argued that many modern societies are still deeply connected to the perceived collective history and culture. He describes this *ethnie* as the core of a nation. Ethnie

---

[72]Anthony D Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* (Routledge, 1998)., 145-153.

[73] Nicholas Sambanis, "Do Ethnic and Nonethnic Civil Wars Have the Same Causes?: A Theoretical and Empirical Inquiry (Part 1)," *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45, no. 3 (2001)., 263.

[74] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso London, 2004).

describes long-existing ties of language, religion, culture, values and history tied in a "myth-symbol complex". This complex is present in every mind of a society and shapes behaviour as well as construction of state and national identity. This does not refute the thesis that states are modern and functional concepts, it rather adds the notion that primordial concepts influence nation-building or are even necessary to unite people under one flag. Smith goes as far as to claim that "ethnie" is a necessary condition for nations and nationalism.[75] This helps understand the prominent observation that people tend to only identify the ones born in their own country as genuine fellow citizens, despite their nationality "on paper".

Most interesting is Smith's definition of two forms of modern nations and citizenship. The "civic-territorial" ideal of a nation emphasises importance of residence, unity of law codes and legal institution in a territory, the central role of common rights and duties of citizenship as well as the importance of a civil culture, which embodies myths and memories of a nation. Consequently, nationality is a matter of identification with a state, knowledge of its culture and adherence to duties. The second form contains primordial motives such as common ancestry and language. The "ethnic –genealogical" approach revolves around popular mobilisation under the flag of presumed ancestry ties, kinship and shared language and culture and historical connection to the homeland. In this case, being born into a certain ethnic group alone qualify a person to obtain a country's citizenship.[76]

In sum, ethnic and national identities are socially constructed, potentially under reference to a mystified past or common culture. This extends to the conception of a state. It can be formed around the claim to be the representation of one certain ethnicity, under the exclusion of others. Alternatively, states can define themselves as multi-ethnic, united by shared citizen's rights and duties. Naturally, purposeful manipulation of ethnicity and identity can be utilised to spark conflict or prolong it. In these cases, it is of great relevance who the agent of identity construction and exploitation are and what their motivation is.

If individuals are responsible for constructing identities, then constructivist explanations for ethnic violence often include rationalist mechanisms. In this case, the focus is often on elite manipulation of mass politics. Fearon and Laitin show empirical evidence that large-scale ethnic violence can be provoked by elites and that strategic construction of identities and narratives with the aim to preserve power exist. Internal conflicts between extremists and moderates often spur leaders or dissidents to provoke violence with members of an out-group in order to construct antagonisms and identities that increase support for the leader's position.

---

[75] Anthony D Smith, "The Ethnic Origins of Nations," (1986).
[76] Ibid.

If the main actors are people "on the ground" ethnic violence often occurs as "communal violence" that is driven by realist motives and conflicts of people living in proximity.[77] This can be perpetuated by actions of opportunistic politicians. In this case, ethnicity is not the cause for conflict but added in later interpretations, characterising the violence as "ethnic" in arrears.[78]

The authors furthermore highlight the puzzle why ethnic groups follow leaders that encourage violence and propose a variety of answers. Firstly, ethnic publics may be conditioned by ethnic discourses that predispose them to violence against ethnic others. This again clearly sides with primordial ways of arguing. Alternatively, people act in their own personal and usually realist agenda that is not directly related to ethnic antipathy. This explanation is more suitable for communal violence which per se isn't ethnically motivated but might be interpreted as such afterwards. In this case personal motives are numerous and often hidden or obscured to a distant researcher. Thirdly, an asymmetry of information between leaders and public and deliberate deception might exist. Leading to an unawareness of the public that their own leaders promote violence. Lastly, leaders might exploit power and state structures to artificially crate a perceived security threat and promote pre-emptive self-defence.[79] This mechanism is close to the very realist idea of a security dilemma but in this approach, the security dilemma is constructed and portrayed than an actual fact and not existent in reality. Hence, the deliberate exploitation of fears by influential actors is the key.

Not directly related to the study of ethnic conflict, but still a dynamic that is often salient in these cases, is the securitisation of certain issues. Based on a constructivist approach, this model considers security an outcome of a social process and discourse. It does not define security in realist terms of state or military security, but takes a multidimensional approach including military, political, economic, societal and environmental issues. The core mechanism of the approach is how actors raise the perceived threat levels of certain issues, so they are seemingly an existential threat, which would legitimise measures or emergency procedures that are beyond the usual responsibilities of the political realm. The threat does not necessarily have to affect the state, but can also threaten the society, environment, territory or political institutions. Crucial in the securitisation of an issue are the actors and how they communicate a referent object – the threat - to an audience. Consequently speech acts and discourse play a vital part. The chances of successfully securitising an issue increase with the actor's power and

---

[77] James D Fearon and David D Laitin, "Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity," *International organization* 54, no. 4 (2000).

[78] Ibid., 869.

[79] Ibid., 868-873.

influence. Democratically elected governments therefore benefit from the legitimacy of being chosen by the electorate and have increased chances of securitising.[80]

2.1.5 SYMBOLIC POLITICS A SYMBIOSIS

Kaufman proposes the theory of "symbolic politics" which links the aforementioned mechanisms of opportunity, greed, grievance and instrumentalization of ethnic identity. Its basic assumption is that each ethnic group possesses a "myth-symbol complex" that identifies the group's history and culture and identity and consequently distinguishes it from others. The myth-symbol complex is not static or primordial, but constantly (re-)interpreted and formed by society or individual "cultural entrepreneurs". Elites or politicians are typically not creators of the ethnic identity, but they exploit it to achieve their goals. Kaufman operationalises myths justifying hostility "as those that explicitly identify the other group as an enemy, as inferior, or both."[81] If the group's myth-symbol complex contains a hostile narrative towards a particular adversary, a violent clash is more likely. Violence is usually justified as a mean to ensure the own group's survival. Elites will typically frame "a conflict as a struggle against hostile, evil or subhuman forces"[82], often to cover their own greedy aspirations. An actual existential threat is motsly not given, it is rather the struggle for group worth and dominance that is at the core of the conflict, more than collective or individual interests. Thus, despite the deliberate appeal to emotions, it is not excluded that elites act for the purpose of power maximisation. Especially those political elites that appeal to emotions, symbols and the own survival are preferred over rational or logical actors. Collective action on behalf of the masses however is driven by emotions, not rational calculations. Eventually causing a mass hostility in which predatory policies towards an enemy will flourish. Kaufman lays down three preconditions for ethnic war. Firstly, a group mythology that justifies hostilities must exist, even before political actors can exploit it. Secondly, emotional appeals will only lead to violence if the group perceives its own status as threatened. Lastly, confirming findings about democratisation and ethnic conflict, a political opportunity has to be present. Opportunities are the ability to mobilise without repression and access to state institutions.[83]

---

[80] Ralf Emmers, "Securitization," in *Contemporary Security Studies*, ed. Alan Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013)., 131-135.

[81] Stuart J Kaufman, "Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice? Testing Theories of Extreme Ethnic Violence," *International Security* 30, no. 4 (2006)., 51.

[82] Ibid., 52.

[83] Ibid., 50-55.

Symbolic politics offers a comprehensive approach for the assessment of ethnic conflict in Myanmar. It allows to incorporate opportunity structures provided through democratisation as well as the purposeful manipulation of ethnicity through chauvinist elites. In this context, grievances rooted in history, failed development promises, inequality or discrimination can be included as well. The crucial part of this approach is the myth-symbol complex and emotional appeals. In order to assess if the conflict in Myanmar is best described by symbolic politics, it is necessary to scrutinise if such a hostile narrative towards an out-group exists and if predatory actors refer to it. Two characteristics are of particular interest. Is violence motivated by existential fears and do elites exploit these fears to pursue their own realist agenda?

2.2 RESEARCH ON ROHINGYA DISCRIMINATION IN MYANMAR

Taking symbolic politics as a point of departure, the following section intends to introduce the repressive measures Rohingya are facing. Since symbolic politics assumes identity-politics with heavy focus on the denigration of an out-group, this section will emphasize the construction of an anti-Rohingya narrative and the resulting discrimination of Rohingya. This includes the accounts on behalf of the Rohingya sides and their demands to be recognised. Furthermore, violent events, involving Rohingya, since the country's democratisation will be summarized in order to outline how initial occurrences of communal violence differ from recent assaults.

2.2.1 ROHINGYA IDENTITY AND CLAIMS TO RAKHINE NATIVITY

The region of Arakan, now Rakhine State, historically has a stronger cultural and economic connection to India and Bengal long remained independent from Burmese influence. The earliest local rulers where Hindus, but the region remained multi-confessional and saw the arrival of Islam around the 7th century.[84] A major influx of Buddhists appeared when the Rakhine expanded from central Burma into Arakan around 1000 AD. Despite being ruled by a Dynasty whose rulers affiliated with Buddhism, the Arakan kingdom stayed multi-ethnic and independent until it was conquered by the Burmese kingdom in 1784,[85] and later merged with the Burmese state after the Anglo-Burman wars and the subsequent colonial period.[86]

---

[84] Ibrahim, *The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar's Hidden Genocide.*, 36.

[85] Carlos Sardiña Galache, "Rohingya and National Identities in Burma," Australian National University, http://www.newmandala.org/the-rohingya-and-national-identities-in-burma/.

[86] Ibrahim, *The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar's Hidden Genocide.*, 38-39.

There are no historical findings or documents that allow to precisely determine the period when Rohingya became a relevant group in Arakan, since both the Rohingya and the Burmese state provide blurred or altered interpretation of history that fits their own narrative. Yet, evidence exists that Muslims from Bengal came to the region as a result of Portuguese and Arakanese raids during the 16th and 17th century. The Arakanese kingdom was tolerant and maintained a balanced patron-client with all religious communities, including Buddhism, Catholicism and Islam, in its territory. Consequently, educated Muslims served in the court as functionaries. Estimations suggest that at the time when the Burmese kingdom annexed Arakan, the region's population consisted of up to 30% Muslims.[87] Analyses of local ethnic groups and linguistic characteristics proves that a group that identified itself as "Rooinga" or "Runiga" was present in Arakan at the turn of the 18th century, shortly after the region became part of the Burmese kingdom.[88] In 1799, Francis Buchanan pointed out that the word Muslims in the Burmese empire referred to themselves as "Rooinga". However, the term did not gain prominence, since there was no need for Rohingya to differentiate themselves from Arakanese or other Muslims. Just the emergence of Burmese nationalism, anti-colonialism and rejection of Indian or Bangladeshi immigrants led to an increased use of the term.[89]

Despite the fact that historic evidence of use of the term Rohingya as well as for their connection to the territory of Rakhine exists, the Rohingya identity is still contested. Jacques P. Leider, eminent Rakhine historian, rightfully points out that the Rohingya identity is a relatively modern construct that serves certain purpose. After initial, unsuccessful efforts of Muslim autonomy in Myanmar, the unification of Muslims under a common ethnic identity is a process that gained prominence in the second half of the 20th century with a clear political intent. The term Rohingya was increasingly used by Muslim elites and historians within Myanmar, as well as the diaspora, to support intentions of being accepted as a part of the Burmese ethnicities as well as to attract attention and support by the international community. In this process, (re-) interpretation of historic sources is a vital part, but it leads to no irrefutable truths, as it is subjective and possibly instumentalized. Hence, the Rohingya narrative competes with the narratives of Burmese and Rakhine historians.[90] The Rohingya side stresses the historical ties to the region and society, whereas the Rakhine side claims that Rohingya ethnicity is a construct, describing Rohingya as immigrants from India and Bangladesh instead. The strongest

---

[87] Galache, "Rohingya and National Identities in Burma".
[88] Ibrahim, *The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar's Hidden Genocide*., 42-43.
[89] Galache, "Rohingya and National Identities in Burma".
[90] Jacques P Leider, "Rohingya: The Name, the Movement, the Quest for Identity," *Nation Building in Myanmar* 255 (2014).

objections to Rohingya interpretation are that the use of the term is evident, but historically far from being common,[91] and that even nowadays Muslims within Myanmar to some extend do not even identify as Rohingya.[92] Nevertheless, some analysts consider the Rohingya identity formation as a success, since the number of Muslims who identify as Rohingya after 2012 has been higher than ever before. Additionally the success manifests itself in the perception of western states and humanitarian organisations, who inherited the narrative of Rohingya as a rightful Burmese ethnicity, and base their support on this perception.[93]

In Myanmar and Rakhine state, the Rohingya identity remains contested. Central Government, Military, local Parties and Rakhine society to a great degree insist on the claim that Rohingya are illegal immigrants and therefore excluded from enjoying citizen's rights. Based on this assumption Rohingya are subject to decades of discrimination.

2.2.2 ROHINGYA DISCRIMINATION

Rohingya faced discrimination by Burmese for decades. The hostilities range from rejection to targeted clearing operations. On the accusation of being immigrants from Bangladesh, the Burmese government has until not accepted Rohingya as part of Burma's ethnic groups. Early attempts of deportation culminated in the Naga Min operation in 1977. Intended to register residents, the campaign involved a destruction of homes by the Burmese Army and an eventual exodus of 200.000 Rohingya. The 1982 citizenship law cemented the Rohingya's status as outsiders by stripping a majority of their Burmese citizenship and the associated rights.[94] In the mid-90s, Rohingya received temporary registration cards, the white cards. These explicitly did not grant citizenship, but enabled them to vote in the 2010 and 2012 elections.[95] Being de facto stateless, the Rohingya were subject to arbitrary treatment and systematic human rights violations by the state. Since the 90s, Rohingya have faced restrictions on marriage and reproduction.[96] They furthermore face restrictions on movement as well as religious freedom, forced labour, land confiscation, destruction of houses as well as limited

---

[91] Ibid.

[92] Adam Burke, "New Political Space, Old Tensions: History, Identity and Violence in Rakhine State, Myanmar," *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 38, no. 2 (2016)., 265.

[93] Jacques P Leider, interview by Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty, 2017.

[94] Matthew Smith et al., "They Gave Them Long Swords: Preparations for Genocide and Crimes against Humanity against Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine State, Myanmar," (Fortify Rights, 2018)., 36.

[95] Thomas MacManus, Penny Green, and Alicia de la Cour Venning, *Countdown to Annihilation: Genocide in Myanmar* (International State Crime Initiative, 2015)., 57.

[96] Ibid., 72.

access to employment, healthcare and education. In 2017, an estimated 120.000 Rohingya lived in camps for internally displaced people, revealing the desperate conditions of a big part of the Rohingya population as well as lacking efforts of Burmese authorities to facilitate inclusion.[97]

Rejection of Rohingya is for decades founded on the argument that they are not native to Myanmar. Nick Cheesman (2017b) examined the concept of "national races" in the country. The author traced back the use of the term *taingyintha,* translated as "national races" that challenged and eventually surpassed other concepts of citizenship. Nowadays the membership in one of the "national races" is a key factor in being considered a Burmese citizen. The term was not particularly relevant before the process of "Myanmafication" in the 1990s. Previously it was used by the military government to promote fraternity among Burmese citizens to oppose foreign powers and influences during the post-colonial and isolationist era. The conception of the term "national races" includes the notion of unity among the Burmese ethnic groups as a natural (but mythological) condition. Thus, a threat against this unity was defined as a threat to Myanmar as a whole. But definitions of who is part of the 'national race' were neither clear nor particularly exclusive. Earlier constitutions contained references to races and granted citizen rights to groups that lived in their respective territory before 1823. The Rohingya were not included in the national races but were granted citizenship under the law that granted it to any person whose ancestors lived in Myanmar for at least two generations. During that time, the Burmese society changed from a multi-ethnic political community to a nation with a fixed set of native "races". Hence, the concept of nativity became a political tool of domination and exclusion. In the context of promoting the Burmese culture as the epitome of national civilisation, the criteria for membership in the group of national races were defined. Rohingya were denied a status as national race, de facto depriving them of the only method to justify the claims to citizenship. The post 1988 government began issuing identity cards that included information on belonging to national races. The Rohingya, although entitled to use a card that signals citizenship, were denied this privilege and had to accept a proxy ID that showed that they are not part of the national races which rendered them de facto stateless. Consequently, the only way for Rohingya (or other groups) to obtain citizenship is claiming and proving to be part of the *taingyntha.* Cheesman remarks that the concept of a state, consisting of national races, remained the dominant concept during the USDP leadership.[98] The persistence of the concept of "national races" lead to an unbroken disenfranchisement of Rohingya, even after the junta gave way to a democratically elected leadership.

---

[97] "Caged without a Roof. Apartheid in Myanmar's Rakhine State," (London: Amnesty International, 2017).

[98] Cheesman, "How in Myanmar "National Races" Came to Surpass Citizenship and Exclude Rohingya."

2.2.3 DISCRIMINATION IN THE CONTEXT OF THE DEMOCRATISATION PROCESS

Prior to Myanmar's democratic shift, Ian Holliday (2010) warned that aggressive nationalism and violence would emerge in the country when elites exploiting nationalistic tensions are not supervised by strong institutions. Holiday pointed out that already during the Burmese pre-independence period nationalist tendencies existed, that were mostly controlled by elites to unify against foreign influence. These nationalist narratives never ceased to exist and shape the political landscape until today. According to Holliday, nationalism was connected early with ethnicity, providing an additional hotbed for conflict. Myanmar's political and ethnic landscape makes it vulnerable for inter-state conflict for various reasons. Ethnic diversity is only a generator of opportunity. It cannot be regarded as the cause. Firstly, democratisation allowed new centres of power and a transfer of sovereignty to the people. Naturally, old power structures were criticized and new players competed for their position. Secondly, the military personal in Myanmar is still highly engaged in national economy and thus has a high interest in preserving its influence. Inflaming and prolonging armed conflict can be exploited to justify an extended military rule. This explains the reluctance of the junta to let go of its dominant position. Although initiating the democratic reform, the military insists on a reservation of 25% of the seats in the national parliament. The analysis of the behaviour of elites strongly suggest that elite predation plays an important role in Myanmar's conflicts. Apart from that, Holliday observes that the process of democratisation is aimed at providing wide political participation, elections, free dialogue and a vibrant media at the greatest possible speed. Referring back to Snyder, who opts for the establishing of strong institutions and a professional media before facilitating open competition, Holliday sees a great threat of uncontrolled ethnic mobilisation and elite manipulation in the advent of the 2010 elections.[99]

The anticipations of growing ethnic conflict during democratisation were confirmed by Burke (2016). His research demonstrates that historical tensions between Muslims and Buddhists in Rakhine were re-ignited after democratisation. In combination with perceived inequalities between Muslims, ethnic Rakhine and Burmese, ethnic nationalism and political freedom, political competition amplified pre-existing conflict and caused violence. Especially

---

[99] Ian Holliday, "Voting and Violence in Myanmar: Nation Building for a Transition to Democracy," in *Burma or Myanmar? The Struggle for National Identity* (World Scientific, 2010).

local parties, championing the interests of the ethnic Rakhine, advance fractionalisation and Rohingya discrimination.[100]

Similar findings appear in Gerry Van Klinken's and Su Mon Thazin Aung's work (2017). Their actor-based approach of contentious politics refutes the thesis that ethnic violence between 2012 and 2014 is based in prejudices inherent in society. Although biases play a role in providing a collective identity, the main driving force behind the conflict during the democratic transition were military elites that tried to preserve their status as a domestic player. Similarly to Snyder, the authors argue that democratisation favours internal competition and ethnic mobilisation. Van Klinken and Aung claim that anti-Muslim sentiments were not salient in society prior to democratisation. Previous Anti-Muslim motives can rather be located in nation-building process and the general xenophobia during the independence movement and the isolationist Burmese socialism and not in economic or political grievances. The first wave of Muslim scapegoating during the democratic transition took a different character. Violence was mostly fuelled by communal divisions and vast poverty. After violent outbursts, local Buddhists and politicians quickly deployed anti-Muslim rhetoric and statements favouring ethnic cleansing. This 'after-the fact interpretation' and the fact that economic factors and communal grievances are involved support the hypothesis that the latest violence in Myanmar can be characterised as communal violence. The authors furthermore claim that few political actors were involved. Instead, influential individuals or collectives were the main actors. Out of this finding, they develop the hypothesis of "social brokers" that connect ideologies and goals of a small group with the broad audience.[101] They successfully broker between "political concerns of a small number of dedicated nationalists and pro-regime activists on the one hand, and the religious concerns of a great mass of ordinary citizens on the others."[102] Unitary among all these actors is the condemnation of Rohingya. How this narrative is constructed and received by the population will be subject of the next section.

2.2.4 ANTI-MUSLIM SENTIMENTS

The democratisation indeed did not improve the public attitude towards Rohingya. The influence of extremist Buddhist groups grew in the new millennium and caused the spread of

---

[100] Burke, "New Political Space, Old Tensions: History, Identity and Violence in Rakhine State, Myanmar."

[101] Gerry van Klinken and Su Mon Thazin Aung, "The Contentious Politics of Anti-Muslim Scapegoating in Myanmar," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 47, no. 3 (2017).

[102] Ibid., 15.

anti-Muslim opinions. Consequently, a lot of research on the character of anti-Muslim narrative and how it is distributed in the Burmese is conducted. By doing this, scholars hope to identify driving forces behind the conflict and provide possible solutions.

The contemporary circumstances leading to Rohingya discrimination are not a sudden emergence. A number of earlier events have to be taken into consideration. The 2007 Saffron Revolution, economic mismanagement, poverty, the impact of typhoon Nargis and failure of the military government to provide disaster relief caused a widening gap between government and clerics, which in turn increased religious support and ties to the National League for Democracy (NLD). Buddhist groups furthermore increased their efforts to provide food, shelter and education to those in need, extending their societal influence. Both, Buddhist ties to society and influence on politics play an important role. Ibrahim identifies three major players that carry on with exclusion of the Muslim group: the military, the NLD and religious groups. Firstly, the military and the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) aimed to keep control over the country's economy and resources. The deep-seated mistrust towards its own citizens and conviction that only native Burmese can rule the country prolong hostilities towards the Rohingya. In this course, the military sided with extremists Buddhist groups and proved to be a major obstacle to implementing democratic reforms to include ethnic groups during the democratic transition. On top of that, it seems likely that the military had no interest in stabilizing conflicting regions in order to keep a coup that can be portrayed as necessary to preserve national security a viable option or to engage in ethnic cleansing in order to fulfil the role of the protector of the state. The NLD is still reliant on the support of the Buddhist majority. Hence, it perpetuated discrimination against Rohingya through its reluctance to address human rights violations, initiate inclusion of Rohingya and to criticise chauvinist clerics. The religious camp in Myanmar is far from unitary, but some parts expedite islamophobia. Although some moderate forces opposed the government and pushed for peace, reconciliation and democratic elections, the driving force behind anti-Muslim campaigns since Myanmar's democratisation were indeed Buddhist groups.[103]

Especially during the political isolation under the military government, religion was exploited to gain popular appeal. Ibrahim identifies certain aspects of the local Theravada Buddhism as not xenophobic or nationalist per se, but weak to exploitation if the construction of a combination of nationalist and religious ideology is desired. This allows to portray foreign ethnicities as a threat to state and religious entity, which have to be protected. The two groups

---

[103] Ibrahim, *The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar's Hidden Genocide*.

that utilize this mechanism are the 969 Movement and The Patriotic Association of Myanmar (Ma Ba Tha). Their goal is to implement Buddhism as a state religion and exclude non-believers. They gained widespread support since converting to Buddhism became a viable option for those who are not native Burmese in order to gain citizenship. The 969 movement, a group of monks under one their one of their influential leaders Ashin U Wirathu, perceives Islam as a threat and pressures the government to strive for ethnic purity on the one hand and indirectly encourages violent attacks on Muslims and their property on the other. The Ma Ba Tha provides textbooks to state schools and introduced religious Sunday schools, facilitating widespread support of their ideas. Although they seem to have a mixed stance towards the violence, members still preach the need to protect the Buddhist community from Islam. Ma Ba Tha encourages boycotts of Muslim business and is said to have close alliances with former military in the USDP. Up until now, the ruling party in the state relies on the support of the religious groups, making criticism on their arguments and practices a sensitive issue. Apart from the national level, local administration in Rakhine state is still heavily influenced by the military. The military's open support for the expulsion of the Rohingya is supported by the local parties Arakan National Party (ANP) and the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party (RNDP) as well as the local population. Anti-Muslim rhetoric, laws that significantly limit their business, civil rights and freedom are the hotbed for deliberate violence against Muslims that occurred in from 2012 to 2015 and caused a significant number of deaths and refugees. Ibrahim concludes that as in 2015 due to racism, deprivation of civil rights, forced birth control, relocation in enclosed areas and violent attacks Myanmar is steering towards a creeping genocide that only needs a triggering event to get out of hand. Even the 2015 elections had no direct effect. To the contrary, political participation of Rohingya was essentially impeded, their few candidates ousted, voting rights revoked and the NLD and Aung San Suu Kyi showed no signs of taking a clear stand in support of the Muslims.[104]

Matt Schissler, Matthew J. Walten and Phyu Phyu Thi (2017) analyse the narratives that shape the opinions and attitudes towards Muslims. The authors outline the discourse and reasons that portray Muslims as a threat. In general, the narrative is reinforced by three inter-related sets of arguments that refer to international events, events within Myanmar and personal experience. People refer to international terrorism, jihad and violence promoted by Islamists and the threat by ISIS, fearing that they will spread to Myanmar. Regarding national events, allegations of rape, the threat to local Buddhism, references to riots and sexual assault on

---

[104] Ibid., 113-120.

Buddhist women are mentioned. Personal stories often involve being disrespected by Muslims or feeling threatened by strict, religious behaviour. Altogether, people not only feel enclosed by a violent, international Muslim community but also threatened by local Muslims. The perception gained from international and national events is generally quite negative. Despite having little first-hand experiences of Muslim violence or threat, people perpetuate the narrative of a "threatening other". Out of the fear that more extremist's methods of violence, as perpetrated by ISIS, seep into Myanmar, violence against Burmese Muslims is justified or accepted. The authors also find contradicting and alternative narratives that oppose Buddhist propaganda. Positive memories of peaceful co-existence still exist and compete with the prevalent hostile ones. This shows that negative sentiments against Muslims are a relatively recent phenomenon, starting around 2012 with massive Buddhist propaganda, and that people still need to process their own experience and evaluate it in contrast to the hostile narrative in their everyday life.[105]

The fear of Rohingya extremists, Muslim expansionism and a terrorist takeover is partially based on historic events. The region previously experienced some Rohingya and Mujahedeen uprisings, but these groups never had significant firepower and have been effectively defunct for at least 20 years. On top of that they were never broadly supported by local Rohingya and were to a degree driven by Bengali Muslims with own power-aspirations. Consequently, the persistent reference by contemporary Burmese elites to these historic events and re-interpretation of communal violence as a conflict between two rivalling ethnic groups is a far more significant driver in the creation of a hostile other.

Already shortly after Burma's independence from British colonial rule, a Mujahedeen uprising in Rakhine State occurred. When the initial demands of a federal Muslim state were ignored, Mujahideen destroyed settlements of Rakhine Buddhists. Nevertheless, when free elections allowed the election of Muslims into parliament, the Mujahedeen insurgency ebbed out.[106] Not long after, the government began pushing Muslims to the edge of society by excluding them from military service, refusing to accept returning refugees as Burmese citizens and replacing Muslim civil servants. As a result, some extremists took up leftover arms from the Second World War and initiated another rebellion for independence of Arakan (now Rakhine State). The uprising had little support from local Muslims, including Rohingya, and

---

[105]Matt Schissler, Matthew J Walton, and Phyu Phyu Thi, "Reconciling Contradictions: Buddhist-Muslim Violence, Narrative Making and Memory in Myanmar," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 47, no. 3 (2017).

[106] Aye Chan, "The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) State of Burma (Myanmar)," *SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research* 3, no. 2 (2005)., p. 441-413.a

many Muslims were forced to cooperate. Yet, the insurgents managed to gain control over the northern part of Rakhine state. After fruitless negotiations, government forces conducted large-scale campaigns against the Mujahideen, neutralised their leadership and scattered their armed forces between 1951 and 1954.[107]

Armed Muslim insurgents reappeared in the region in the 70s. Remaining militant Muslims regrouped as the Rohingya Patriotic Front, motivated by rise of global pan-Islamist movements. Within a decade, the Rohingya Patriotic Front split into multiple factions. One of the radical groups became the Rohingya Solidary Organisation (RSO) in 1982, which emerged as one of the most militant and religious groups claiming to fight on behalf of the Rohingya. In the light of the 1978 "Naga Min" campaign, which caused 200.000 Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh, the RSO gained attention and support by various like-minded organisations from Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Kashmir and Malaysia.[108] The RSO itself split again in 1986, facilitating the formation of the Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front (ARIF). Both groups reunited in a loose coalition in 1998 as the Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO). The RSO's operational base was set in Bangladesh. RSO and other militant groups never had territory or a base in Myanmar. Although in possession of a few rifles and explosives, the rebel groups never had enough support or fighters to launch serious attacks or a guerrilla war. By the 90s, all the Rohingya insurgent groups had been de-facto defunct. Since then, violent groups occasionally claim affiliation with one of these groups, yet a functional overarching organisation is not present.[109] Reportedly, most of these groups did not enjoy broad support by the Burmese Muslim populations and militant members often proved to be members of Bangladeshi Muslim extremists, who used the RSO as cover for their own aspirations and activities.[110] Among the various Muslim insurgent groups in Myanmar, some had the articulated aim of creating a separate Muslim state. The bigger part, however, demanded freedom of worship, guarantees against religious persecution, and equal political and economic rights for Muslims in Myanmar.[111]

---

[107] Moshe Yegar, "The Muslims of Burma, a Study of Minority Groups, Weesbaden, Otto Harrassowitz, 1972," *Natmagh Bon Kyaw, History of Anglo-Burmese War (in Burmese), Pagan Publisher, Rangoon* (1975)., pp. 95-100.

[108] Bertil Lintner, "Myanmar (Burma): Militancy in Arakan State," *Asia News Monitor*, 12/19/2016 Dec 19 2016.

[109] "Myanmar: A New Muslim Insurgency in Rakhine State," in *Asia Report*, ed. International Crisis Group (Yangon/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2016)., p. 3f.

[110] "Myanmar (Burma): Militancy in Arakan State."

[111] Andrew Selth, "Burma's Muslims and the War on Terror," *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 27, no. 2 (2004)., p. 113.

As Muslim insurgency has ebbed out in the new millennium, minor incidents of Muslim aggression were adduced to fuel the Buddhist population's perceived threat by Muslims. However, from a rational standpoint these seem not sufficient to sustain the allegations of a Muslim conquest of Rakhine. The first instance of communal violence was triggered by rape and murder of a Buddhist woman by multiple Muslim men. Additional events that triggered revenge-attacks were a dispute between a Muslim shopkeeper and a Buddhist customer, in which the customer received a serious beating. After word spread that the victim had died of her injuries, violence flared up. In this situation, but unrelated to the initial event, a Buddhist monk was killed by Muslims, presumably in retaliation to previous violence. In other instances, arbitrary incidents sparked Buddhist retaliation and destruction of Rohingya settlements. Among these were a case where a Muslim woman knocked over a monk's alms bowl in a crowded market, the attack of a presumably mentally ill Muslim man, who committed an arson attack on a Buddhist woman and multiple instances of sexual assault.[112]

The state-commissioned investigation on communal violence in 2012 and 2013 in Rakhine reports that a majority of over 80 percent of Rakhine people believed in a Bengali[113] effort to take over Rakhine State, and that violent events were prepared in advance as part of a plan to convert Rakhine into an Islamic state. [114] The initial events that triggered the violence, however are arbitrary and to a greater degree an expression of communal tensions. It is important to point out, that these fears not only existed before Muslim assaults occurred, they also were mostly responsible for the retaliation in which most violence and destruction of settlements occurred.

Thus, no rational explanation can be found that point towards actual events that fuel the fear of Muslims. It is much more the deliberate manipulation of elites. Yet geopolitical events during that time played in their hand and contributed to the people's receptiveness to an alleged Muslim and Rohingya takeover. A great deal of the aversion and actions against Rohingya are rooted in the perception that a transnational holy war might arrive in Burma. These concerns, which are not unsubstantiated, are amplified by advancements of terrorist groups in the Western Asia and Southern Asia but also by developments in neighbouring Southeast Asian countries. There are various reasons why jihad in Southeast Asia is possible. Some Pakistani regions are

---

[112] "The Dark Side of Transition: Violence against Muslims in Myanmar," in *Asia Report* (Yangon/Jakarta/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2013)., 7,8, 12-15.

[113] The reports refuses to use the term Rohingya. Instead it adopts the official government usage of „Bengali". Thus, here can not be without differentiated if a threat by foreign Muslims is implied or if it solely driven by Rohingya Muslims.

[114] "Final Report of Inquiry Commission on Sectarian Violence in Rakhine State," ed. Myo Myint (Republic of the Union of Myanmar, 2013)., 14f.

known to be a hotbed for Islamic terrorism, partially tolerated or even supported by the state.[115] Bangladesh is experiencing increasing radicalisation and the subsequent establishment of terrorist organisations, which carry out operations in neighbouring regions.[116] India has been the target of Islamist terror attacks for decades. Admittedly, the most potent Mujahideen fled the country, but foreign groups remain a constant threat to Indian security.[117] Hence, fears that terrorism will swap into Myanmar are well founded, especially after radical Islamist organisations voiced their support for Rohingya and threatened consequences for Myanmar. However, incidents of people with a jihadist agenda, attempting to conduct an attack, have been isolated cases that did not succeed or did not cause significant damage.[118]

After the surge of violence against Muslims in Myanmar in 2012 and the following year, jihadist propaganda included Myanmar as one of the next potential battlefields in Asia. Some radical organisations claimed an alliance with Rohingya and published pictures of Rohingya men participating in terrorist training camps. On top of that, the leadership of the Islamic State called to take up arms in the name of Rohingya.[119] Al-Qaeda, likewise, issued a statement describing attacks against Rohingya as part of a campaign against Muslims and that they consider it a "legal obligation under sharia to come to their defence."[120] However, Southeast Asia has neither seen an Islamist, internationalized conflict nor a jihadist conflict where external state actors had to intervene with troops, which disproves the suspicions of a jihad in the country.[121] The possibilities of Rohingya fighters training with Muslim fundamentalists or an influx of jihadist rebels was picked up by Burmese political and religious actors and subsequently forwarded to the local population, paving the way for violent escalations.[122]

---

[115] "Pakistan's Jihadist Heartland: Southern Punjab," in *Asia Report* (International Crisis Group (ICG), 2016).
[116] Raj Kumar Sharma, "Rise of Islamic Radicalism in Bangladesh Implications for the Security of North-East India," *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies* 19, no. 1/2 (2015).
[117] Praveen Swami, "India's Invisible Jihad," *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 22 (2017).
[118] Robert Birsel, "Al Qaeda Warns Myanmar of 'Punishment' over Rohingya," Reuters, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-alqaeda/al-qaeda-warns-myanmar-of-punishment-over-rohingya-idUSKCN1BO0NI., National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, "Global Terrorism Database [Data File]," National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd.
[119] Laura Steckman, "Myanmar at the Crossroads: The Shadow of Jihadist Extremism," *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 7, no. 4 (2015).
[120] Zachary Abuza, "Myanmar's Tatmadaw and the Making of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army " *Terrorism Monitor*, no. 10 (2017)., p. 10.
[121] Daniel Finnbogason and Isak Svensson, "The Missing Jihad. Why Have There Been No Jihadist Civil Wars in Southeast Asia?," *The Pacific Review* 31, no. 1 (2018)., p. 104f.
[122] Matthew Smith, *" All You Can Do Is Pray": Crimes against Humanity and Ethnic Cleansing of Rohingya Muslims in Burma's Arakan State* (Human Rights Watch, 2013)., pp. 28f.

2.3 MAJOR EVENTS OF VIOLENCE INVOLVING ROHINGYA SINCE THE DEMOCRATIC TRANSITION

The first years after the inauguration of a civilian government remained relatively calm. But as soon as 2012, violence in Rakhine state increased. Three phases can be observed. The first one is a surge of communal violence close to the 2012 by-elections. The period between the preparations for the 2015 elections until the 2016 ARSA attacks is characterised by institutionalised Rohingya discrimination and disenfranchisment, a relatively low number of violent clashes, but a tangible hostile rethoric. Finally, after the terrorist attacks in 2016 and 2017, a military-run campaign of eviction is present, to which the civil government turns a blind eye.

In 2012, growing hostilities and inflammatory propaganda erupted into intercommunal violence when a rape and murder of a Buddhist woman occurred. After a pacification through the declaration of a state of emergency, the violence re-erupted in October. The attacks on Muslim communities seemed increasingly coordinated, which raised suspicions that they executed as a retaliation to previous attacks. Estimations assume that in total almost 200 people died, mostly on the Rohingya side, 8614 homes were destroyed and more than 100,000 Rohingya ended up displaced.[123] In 2013, violence spread to central Myanmar and northern Rakhine, causing at least 44 casualties. After a dispute in a gold shop and murderer of a Buddhist monk, the situation escalated and mobilised mobs engaged in violence and looting. Other triggering events were cases of sexual assault, attempted murder and false allegations of a planned jihad further aggravated the situation.[124]

Cheesman (2017a) proposes to categorise violence in Myanmar as communal violence.[125] Focusing on events between 2012 and 2014, from localised inter-group violence to large-scale state supported killing and destruction of property, he remarks that they can be characterised as "recurrent, sporadic, direct physical hostility realised through repeated public expressions that Muslims constitute an existential threat to Buddhists". [126] This suits the definition of communal violence as "overtly performed, episodic, recurrent, sporadic, direct physical hostility between self-defining and mutually identifiable ascriptive communities."[127]

---

[123] "Myanmar: The Politics of Rakhine State," in *Asia Report* (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2014)., 8-11.
[124] Ibrahim, *The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar's Hidden Genocide*., 103.
[125] Nick Cheesman, "Introduction: Interpreting Communal Violence in Myanmar," *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 47, no. 3 (2017b).
[126] Ibid., 1.
[127] Ibid., 4.

In this context, explanations for the conflict are typically framed as an expression of common interests of members of one community, which are existentially threatened by another group. It is important to note that communal violence is not rooted in religious adversaries, but that this characteristic is often added through after-the-fact interpretative claims. [128]

Initial events that ignite conflicts are also often devoid of an ethnic narrative but rather an expression of local disputes over economic issues, territory, crime or rape. It is assumed that all the involved individuals understand the confrontation in different terms and give differing explanations for its outbreak. Communal violence furthermore assumes that local disputes are integrated by politicians and state authorities into larger frameworks and narratives. They way conflicts are interpreted, framed and conveyed by elites therefore becomes an important part of the analysis. Furthermore, atrocities occurring during military counter insurgencies are not included. While some previous initial incidents might be characterised as communal violence, an opinion that is also advocated by the Burmese government,[129] an involvement of government forces in a great amount of cases characterised as ethnic cleansing cannot be overlooked. State security forces either failed or refused to intervene or actively participated in violent acts. The United Nations observed forced population transfers, attacks on political and religious leaders and violence towards Rohingya, all of which involve military personnel. Based on their findings the UN accuses the Burmese government of pursuing a strategy for ethnic cleansing.[130]

2014 and 2015 saw the implementation of discriminatory laws against Rohingya. Renewed efforts to pursue citizenship verification did not allow the self-identification as Rohingya. Furthermore, the process to obtain citizenship was complicated by the need to prove Burmese descent prior to the country's independence. [131] Lastly, Rohingya were effectively barred from participating in elections or fielding own parties or candidates for the 2015 election.[132] Apart from that, civil unrest or violence has been relatively calm during these years (see Figure 4).

---

[128] Ibid., 4-7.

[129] Smith, *" All You Can Do Is Pray": Crimes against Humanity and Ethnic Cleansing of Rohingya Muslims in Burma's Arakan State.*, 86,110.

[130] Ibid., 11-15.

[131] "Myanmar: The Politics of Rakhine State.", 20-21.

[132] "The Myanmar Elections: Results and Implications ", in *Crisis Group Asia Briefing*, ed. International Crisis Group (ICG) (Yangon/Brussels: International Crisis Group (ICG), 2015)., 2.
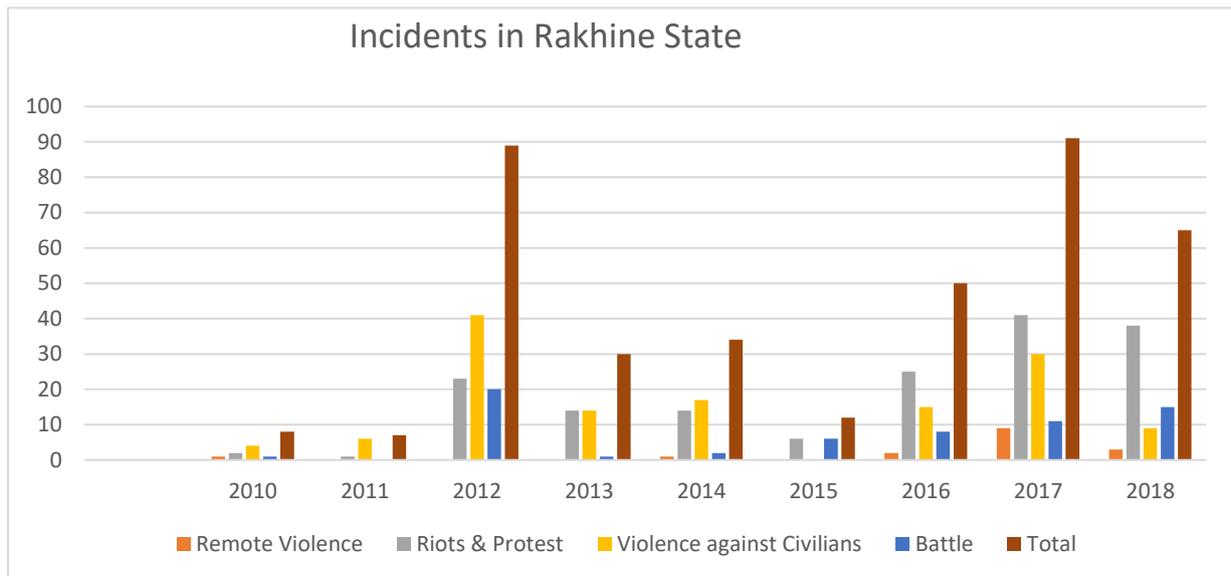
Figure 4 - Incidents in Rakhine State[133]

A framework of ethnic cleansing seems more suitable for the latest events in 2016 and 2017. An estimated 43.000 refugees fled Myanmar after a military counteroffensive was launched in retaliation for extremist's attacks on security forces and border posts in 2016. The military operation was criticised for the occurrence of systematic human rights violations such as executions, sexual violence, torture, arson, enforced disappearance and destruction of Rohingya property.[134] The situation reached a whole new level in 2017. After a coordinated offensive by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) in August 2017 on police posts, the military launched a brutal offensive that "failed to discriminate between militants and the general population."[135] Prior to the military campaign, Rohingya were reportedly relocated, disarmed and put under a curfew, while the military increased its presence and trained and equipped local militias.[136] In reaction to the ARSA attacks, the military furthermore carried out a multiphased scorched earth campaign, systematically destroying Rohingya homes. While the first stage occurred in direct reaction to the attacks, the second phase extended over weeks, even

---

[133] Cliondah Raleigh et al., "Introducing Acled - Armed Conflict Location and Event Data," *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 5 (2010).

[134] "Report of Ohchr Mission to Bangladesh: Interviews with Rohingyas Fleeing from Myanmar since 9 October 2016," ed. UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) 2017).

[135] "Myanmar's Rohingya Crisis Enters a Dangerous New Phase," in *Asia Report*, ed. International Crisis Group (ICG) (Brussels2017)., 7.

[136] Smith et al., "They Gave Them Long Swords: Preparations for Genocide and Crimes against Humanity against Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine State, Myanmar."

- 45 -

after the "clearance operations" had officially ended.[137] A report by a team of Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights observed that the acts of violence towards Rohingya are conducted in a coordinated and systematic manner. Their report challenges the assumption that deaths and destruction of homes were merely collateral damage of a military response operation to previous acts of collective violence. Instead, a purposeful campaign is more likely. The strategy consists of arbitrary arrests mostly targeting the male population, Rohingya leaders and opinion-makers as well as the denial of access to food, livelihood and other commodities of everyday life. Additionally, the destruction of settlements and farming land as well as religious sites and the deliberate spread of trauma through acts of brutality like killings, rape, disappearances and torture have been observed. These acts were committed by military forces and often accompanied by armed Buddhist mobs. Settlements were systematically destroyed and Rohingya were warned of imminent attacks and denounced as "Bengali who do not belong to Myanmar". This demonstrates on the one hand that the attacks were well coordinated and on the other that the strategy is to destroy Rohingya livelihood in order to prevent them from returning to their homes. These suspicions of ethnic cleansing are underlined by the intended use of a law that allows the government to claim burnt land in order to prevent the return of internally displaced people.[138] The UNHCR reports that more than 730.000 Rohingya refugees arrived in Bangladesh since the violent clashes in 2017.[139]

In summary, the perception of being threatened by Muslims has grown significantly. This fear explains why the public seldom opposes violence against Muslims or campaigns to achieve ethnic purity. The Burmese government has repeatedly denied that it considers Rohingya as Burmese citizens. It therefore feels not obligated to protect them or allow them citizen's rights or political participation. Quite contrary, Rohingya are considered illegal Bengali immigrants and their relocation is preferred. The elected Burmese governments have not only politically disenfranchised Rohingya, it has also consciously allowed for a military campaign of ethnic cleansing.

Theories on ethnic and intrastate conflict suggest a variety of possibilities to explain the emergence of an ethnic conflict. In the case of Myanmar, aversions, rooted in colonial history, are now amplified by competing political and societal actors in the political framework

---

[137] "'My World Is Finished' - Rohingya Targeted in Crimes against Humanity in Myanmar," (London: Amnesty International, 2017)., 27-40.

[138] Thomas Hunecke, "Mission Report of Ohchr Rapid Response Mission to Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh," (Geneva: United Nations Human Rights Office Of The High Commisioner, 2017).

[139] UNHCR, "Refugee Response in Bangladesh," Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/myanmar_refugees.

provided by democratisation. A central element of elite-competition is the deliberate manipulation of ethnicity and existing hatred towards a previously designed outgroup. This led to a disenfranchisement of Rohingya and eventually to their violent displacement. The narrative, demonising the Muslim, is spread by religious extremists, but generally adopted by political actors. It revolves around al alleged Muslim threat and intended take-over, which has to be prevented in order to guarantee the survival of Buddhism in Myanmar. The following analysis will identify the involved actors, their attitude towards Rohingya and possible discriminatory actions they have undertaken to maximise their support-base.

CHAPTER III: KEY SOCIETAL ACTORS IN MYANMAR

The following section will introduce the relevant actors who are subject to the subsequent analysis. Next to presenting the relevant figures and used sources, background information on actors' goals and motivation and the circumstances under which actors operate will be briefly introduced. For actors on the level of the central government, special attention will be paid to their economic interests, reforms and performance as well as their foreign relations and strategy regarding ethnic reconciliation. The sections on local Rakhine actors will explain the societal background and how actors interact with the local population.

3.1 THE TATMADAW

For most of Myanmar's modern history, the Tatmadaw was a textbook example for a praetorian ruler. Next to militaries responsibilities, it assumed all governmental functions. After the dissolution of the Union of Burma, the military in Myanmar moved beyond the traditional function of acting as a security apparatus and became a governing body for decades, monopolising the economy and penetrating all state organs of the single-party state as well as the media. During their reign, generals stressed their role as mere protector of nation and state institutions with the intention to work towards the development of a democratic constitution. This argumentation and the authoritarian one-military-party system are characteristic for a praetorian ruler. The military administration ruled uncontested through its civil organs the BSPP, SLORC and SPDC from 1962 to 2011.[140]

3.1.1 CONTEMPORARY SELF-CONCEPTION

Today the Tatmadaw portrays itself a servant to democracy. Military leaders seldom omit mentioning that the military is still a vital security organ, especially in the protection of the Burmese democracy and constitutions. A continued participation in governance is, on their accord necessary, to ensure unity and cohesion and protection of the democratic institutions. The military now presents itself as "cohesive and bureaucratized force, expert in management of violence, with a professional ethic, a high moral position and potential for self-

---

[140] Renaud Egreteau, "Military Guardianship and the Search for a Pacted Transition," in *Caretaking Democratization: The Military and Political Change in Myanmar* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

sufficiency". [141] Besides the capability of providing protection, other characteristics of a praetorian army, such as independence and self-ascribed moral superiority, are still evident within the Tatmadaw's self-perception.

The transition towards democracy was initiated on the junta's terms in the first place. The armed forces maintain a parental self-perception and intend to stay a major player in politics.[142] To stay a relevant actor, the Tatmadaw enshrined its role as a political leader in the basic principles of the constitution.[143] Although the military's control is not absolute anymore, it still qualifies as a praetorian ruler, due to its independence and uncontested presence in state institutions. The factors that contribute to this status are legal immunity for its members, the control of institutions of the civilian government through military officers, exclusive control of the key ministries of Home Affairs, Defence, and Border affairs and a reservation of 25% of the seats in the Legislative Assembly for Tatmadaw personnel. The Tatmadaw furthermore controls local assemblies through a reservation of one-third of the seats.[144] This makes the Tatmadaw an independent veto power on national and state level as well as gives it the freedom to operate within the country without any supervision or liability. Additionally, the constitution still grants the commander in chief the right to take over executive and judicative if necessary.[145] Thus despite considering itself an institution of a modern democratic state, the Tatmadaw still maintains as many options of getting involved in political decision making as possible. Generally, the Tatmadaw's commitment to genuine democratic transition seems subordinate to preservation of power and self-enrichment.

3.1.2 ECONOMIC INTERESTS

During military rule, the Tatmadaw controlled policymaking, including the economic sector. This allowed it to reserve profitable sectors for the Tatmadaw-owned holding companies like the Union of Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited (UMEHL). Through the implementation of a licence-and-permit system, controlled through military channels, the Tatmadaw leadership secured further opportunities for obtaining rents and strengthened privileged access for Tatmadaw business conglomerates. The generated income did not flow

---

[141] "The Continuing Political Salience of the Military in Post-Spdc Myanmar," *Debating democratization in Myanmar* 233 (2014)., 262.
[142] "Military Guardianship and the Search for a Pacted Transition."
[143] "Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar," (Yangon: Ministry of Information, 2008)., 3.
[144] "The Continuing Political Salience of the Military in Post-Spdc Myanmar."
[145] "Patterns of Persistent Praetorian Behaviour."

into the military's budged, but directly into the hands of shareholders, the pension fund and the pockets of leading commanders and their families. [146] Reforms towards a market-oriented economy, accompanying the democratic transition, now threaten the military's control over the economic sector. The commercial interests of the military brass, however, remains. Lucrative businesses, including cigarettes, petroleum trade, alcoholic beverages, manufacturing venues and jade and other resources remain in the hands of military officers and their relatives through a complex network of enterprises.[147]

Article 37 (a-b) of the constitution states, "The Union is the ultimate owner of all the lands and all natural resources above and below the ground, above and beneath the water and in the atmosphere in the Union."[148] Therefore, when it comes to the extraction of natural resources, the central government enjoys all rights and benefits, while single states can only claim a share of the revenue (at best). Additionally, laws to protect private landownership are inadequate and consequently land-grabbing remains salient. [149] Since the Tatmadaw still dominates the oil, gas and mining industry, the generals have crucial interests in securing access to resources and soil. It is furthermore in its best interest to prevent single states or resident ethnicities to claim their share. The military secures this capability via the Ministry of Home Affairs, which allows appointing favourable personnel for the administration of states and regions.[150]

Rakhine state and the adjacent ocean in particular are rich in oil and gas reserves. Only a small margin of the extracted resources are reserved for the domestic market. Over 80 percent are exported to China, which is involved in various other projects in Rakhine State. Next to deep-water ports, an oil and gas pipeline runs from the Bay of Bengal, through Rakhine, to Kunming in China. This pipeline, as part of China's One-Belt-Road initiative, allows the country to bypass the Malacca-strait and ease resource imports from the Middle East. Consequently, next to the Burmese government and military, China has a geostrategic interest for peace and stability in the region. India has similarly invested in infrastructure and resource extraction, putting Myanmar in a situation where it has to balance between two rivalling

---

[146] "Myanmar's Military: Back to the Barracks," in *Asia Briefing*, ed. International Crisis Group (Yangon/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2014)., 9-10.

[147] Michael Peel, "Myanmar: The Military-Commercial Complex - the Emerging Market Tempts Multinationals but Groups with Links to the Army Loom Large," Financial Times, https://www.ft.com/content/c6fe7dce-d26a-11e6-b06b-680c49b4b4c0.

[148] "Natural Resources of Myanmar (Burma): Ownership, Management, Revenue Sharing and Impacts," (Ethnic Nationalities Affairs Centre (Union of Burma), 2017)., 13.

[149] Tom Kramer, "Ethnic Conflict and Lands Rights in Myanmar," *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 82, no. 2 (2015)., 363-370.

[150] "Natural Resources of Myanmar (Burma): Ownership, Management, Revenue Sharing and Impacts.", 14.

superpowers while caretaking their interests on Burmese soil. As part of this, securing peace and the military's political leverage over the region is in the Tatmadaw's best interest. It thus intends to disenfranchise Rohingya and even Rakhine ethnics in political representation, push for expulsion and strengthen the Union-friendly Bamar groups in the state, while protecting the business and investments of strategic partners.

3.1.3 COOPERATION WITH FOREIGN COUNTRIES AND ARMED FORCES

In international affairs, the military behaves almost like an independent state organ. The Army Chief Min Aung Hlaing has held talks with political leaders of regional allies, including Narendra Modi,[151] Xi Jinping,[152] Thailand's prime Minister Prayut Chan-o-cha[153] and Japan's Minister for Foreign Affairs Taro Kono.[154] The Tatmadaw traditionally had close ties to the Chinese military and fundamentally relied on the supply of Chinese weapons and equipment. Arms imports from China still account to around 70% of Myanmar's total weapons imports today.[155] With the democratic transition, the Tatmadaw opened up in order to overcome its status as a pariah. After the initiation of Myanmar's reform process, major western forces initiated cooperation with the Tatmadaw. Hoping to improve the army's professionalism, adherence to international law and conflict management. Australia, the United Kingdom and the United States launched training and education programs for Tatmadaw soldiers. Existing arms embargos, however, stayed in place. Thus, China, India and Russia remain important military partners. After the 2017 military retaliation, multiple international organisations called to suspend military cooperation with the Tatmadaw.[156] In reaction, the EU issued travel bans and tightened the arms embargo[157] and the US imposed travel and financial sanctions on Tatmadaw members,[158] but other cooperation stayed in place. China, India and Russia continue

---

[151] Joe Kumbun, "The Blossoming Relationship between India and Myanmar," Frontier Myanmar, https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/the-blossoming-relationship-between-india-and-myanmar.

[152] "Senior General Min Aung Hlaing Meets with Chinese President Mr Xi Jinping," *The Global New Light Of Myanmar*, 11.2. 2016.

[153] "Senior General Min Aung Hlaing Holds Talks with Thai Pm," news release, 2018.

[154] "Foreign Minister Kono Visits Myanmar," news release, 8.6., 2018.

[155] Pieter D. Wezeman et al., "Trends in Interntaional Arms Transfers 2017," in *SIPRI Fact Sheet* (Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2018)., 9-10.

[156] Cameron Hill, "Defence Cooperation with Myanmar - Australia and Other Countries: A Quick Guide," in *Research Paper Series, 2017-18* (Canberra: Parliamentary Library, Commonwealth of Australia, 2017).

[157] "Myanmar/Burma: Eu Sanctions 7 Senior Military, Border Guard and Police Officials Responsible for or Associated with Serious Human Rights Violations against Rohingya Population," news release, 06.25.2018, 2018.

[158] "Defence Cooperation with Myanmar - Australia and Other Countries: A Quick Guide."

their arms exports, and Japan and Australia carry on with educational programs.[159] Vietnam and Burmese generals recently renewed commitments to cooperation in the defence industry, logistics and medical services.[160]

3.1.4 ETHNIC RECONCILIATION

Regarding ethnic reconciliation, the military has often been an obstacle. It adheres firmly to basic constitutional principles, formulated in preparations for democratic transition. These include a non-disintegration of the Union and national unity as well as an involvement of the Defence Services in a national political leadership role in the future state.[161] The Tatmadaw thus obstructs commitments to ethnic reconciliation and related autonomy of peripheral states. The few advances in ceasefire agreements, initiated by the Thein Sein government, were contrasted by amplified military clearance operations in northern Myanmar, which even targeted EAOs that had previously signed peace agreements. Other EAOs were even categorically excluded from negotiations. By conducting operations and applying a divide and rule approach, the Tatmadaw aims to secure access to natural resources as well as justify its claim to participate in the country's political leadership.[162] The military's course has not changed significantly since the NLD took office in 2016. The two divergent actors now struggle to find consensus in the peace process. No change in the constitution can be made without the Tatmadaw's consent and Aung San Suu Kyi has to acknowledge the military's course in internal affairs in order to preserve their fragile cooperation. The military aims subordinate EAOs under military command or demands bilateral agreements, while the NLD tries to advance ethnic reconciliation through commitments to federalism. The democratic party has indeed initiated multilateral dialogue in the 21st Century Panglong Conferences, yet the Tatmadaw continues to be more of an obstacle than a partner. It firmly adheres to the principles of non-disintegration and non-secession and continues operations in the north. It additionally insists that signing the National Ceasefire Agreement, designed by the previous government, is a precondition for EAOs to enter negotiations. Simultaneously, it refuses to sign peace deals with certain EAOs,

---

[159] The Myanmar Times, "Japan Affirms Military Ties with Tatmadaw," The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/news/japan-affirms-military-ties-tatmadaw.html., "Myanmar (Burma): Australia Reaffirms Defence Cooperation with Tatmadaw," *Asia News Monitor*, Mar 08, 2018 2018.

[160] "Vietnam-Myanmar (Burma): Vietnam, Myanmar Promote Defence Cooperation," *Asia News Monitor*, 06/18/
2018 Jun 18 2018.

[161] "Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar."

[162] "Beyond Panglong: Myanmar's National Peace and Reform Dilemma," in *Myanmar Policy Briefing* (Amsterdam: The Transnational Institute, 2017)., 17-26.

mostly from the Northern Alliance, and objects their participation in the Panglong Conferences.[163]

3.1.5 JUSTIFYING ACTOR SELECTION

In sum, the military portrays itself as guarantor of Myanmar's security and development, increasing its legitimacy as acting as a co-operator of a civil government. It however rejects any threat to its independence and capabilities of securing interests on Myanmar's soil. Due to ongoing armed conflict within the country, the military's substantial involvement in economy and resource extraction as well as the reservation of seats in crucial government bodies, the Tatmadaw remains an important political actor until today. Apart from that, it played a crucial role in operations in Rakhine, which disproportionally affected Rohingya civilians. Due to the media attention and popularity of General Hlaing, it can be expected that the Tatmadaw significantly contributes to the formation of opinion in Myanmar. Thus, the analysis is, next to the military's actions, chiefly concerned with its attitude and comments towards Rohingya The military's attitude towards Rohingya as well as the self-perception of the military become obvious in Min Aung Hlaing's annual speeches on Myanmar's Armed Forces day. The senior general furthermore actively uses social media, where his speeches and positions are presented in Burmese and English translations. With roughly 1.38 million Facebook followers in June 2018, his popularity does not fall short of Aung San Suu Kyi's, who enjoys 1.98 million followers.[164] Given the fact that Hlaing is definitely not as well-known as Suu Kyi on an international stage, the Burmese web-community seems to have a favour for the Tatmadaw's narrative. Based on his popularity, leading position and communicativeness, the general's statements will be used in the following analysis to assess the Tatmadaw's general course, perception of democratic transition and attitude towards Rohingya.

3.2 THEIN SEIN AND THE USDP

In February 2011, Thein Sein took office as Myanmar's first democratically elected president. Initially regarded as an extension of previous military rule, the new government soon began liberalising the country's restrictive state and economy and sought to improve foreign

---

[163] Ibid., 26-36.
[164] The general's Facebook page has been deleted in August 2018. A copy of the page can be visited at: https://web.archive.org/web/20180822175836/https://www.facebook.com/seniorgeneralminaunghlaing/.

relations. Peace talks and ceasefire agreements advanced, restrictions on media, freedom of assembly, and on trade unions were lifted, and hundreds of political prisoners have been released.[165] All this was done to gain legitimacy as a democratic, civilian player. The USDP and Thein sein, deeply rooted in Myanmar's military had no intention to abolish systematic military participation in the Burmese state apparatus. Even the concessions made in the peace process served the purpose to shake off the image of a militarist leadership. The country nevertheless opened up and, above all, reintroduced a parliamentary system with state and national assemblies that allowed for surprisingly open debate.

3.2.1 ECONOMIC REFORM

The SPDC-government had begun exporting natural resources since the 2000s, which raised the country's GDP and increased the income for the military government but failed to improve the standard of living for vast parts of the society.[166] As the Thein Sein government faced a stagnating economic growth, the leadership had to act. To bolster Myanmar's economic development, the USDP government initiated reforms in the financial sector, which was previously heavily restricted by the junta's strive for state autonomy. The new reforms introduced an improved exchange of currencies, strengthened the central bank's independence and allowed for more extensive loans and foreign investments. Positive developments caused a lift of US sanctions and the launch of new activities by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank.[167] Striving for a market economy, the country additionally created special economic zones for FDI and cooperated with Japanese companies to establish a stock exchange.[168] As a result, the trade' share in the GDP skyrocketed from 0.2% in 2011 to 47.4 percent in 2015. FDI grew from 2.5 billion to 4.1 billion US$.[169] Yet, the liberalisation significantly raised the value of the Burmese currency, causing a severe competitive disadvantage of the domestic manufacturing sector.[170] Neither agricultural productivity nor

---

[165] Morten B Pedersen, "Myanmar in 2014:'Tacking against the Wind'," *Southeast Asian Affairs* 2015, no. 1 (2015).
[166] Toshihiro Kudo, "One Year of Myanmar's Thein Sein Government: Background and Outlook of Reforms," (Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economies - Japan External Trade Organization, 2012)., 3-4.
[167] Sean Turnell, "Banking and Financial Regulation and Reform in Myanmar," *Journal of Southeast Asian Economies* (2014).
[168] Pedersen, "Myanmar in 2014:'Tacking against the Wind'.", 328-329.
[169] "World Bank Open Data," (World Bank, 2019).
[170] Joseph Allchin, "Taste of Democracy Sends Burma's Fragile Economy into Freefall," Independent Print Limited, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/taste-of-democracy-sends-burmas-fragile-economy-into-freefall-2357511.html.

industrial employment has significantly grown during the Thein Sein era, indicating that economic growth and FDI have not benefitted the poorest part of the population.[171]

3.2.2 FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The preceding junta had joined ASEAN in 1997, hoping to improve the country's reputation and economic performance while staying guarded by the ASEAN's doctrine of non-interference in internal affairs of members. Myanmar indeed profited from ASEAN investment and regional integration, but the junta embarrassed ASEAN on multiple occasions and rejected constructive criticism by ASEAN members.[172] The relations changed with the USDP's change of foreign policy. Previously a pariah state, the democratised Myanmar departed from bilateral agreements and sought more regional and international integration to overcome isolation and sanctions. The USDP government realised that ASEAN was an effective vessel for the country to reintegrate into the international community. Spurred by the credibility of an elected government and reforms, Myanmar improved its position in ASEAN and served as the organisation's chairman in 2014. This allowed the country to foster ties with neighbouring countries and improve the relation with the US. Apart from the ASEAN nations, the country also improved relations with India, Russia and Japan.[173] At the end of Thein Sein's presidency China still was the country's main trade partner, accounting for more than 39% of Myanmar's trade.[174] Yet in the same period, the Burmese share of intra-ASEAN trade roughly doubled.[175][176]

3.2.3 STRATEGY FOR ETHNIC RECONCILIATION

The Thein Sein government inherited the conflicts with EAOs from the previous military government. Naturally, peace became one of its priorities, as it would have been an achievement that would have endowed the party with a positive image of independence from the military and a great chance for re-election. Through the creation of a framework and institutions for dialogue between the conflicting parties as well as growing credibility through

---

[171] Pedersen, "Myanmar in 2014:'Tacking against the Wind'.", 237-238-

[172] Vo Xuan Vinh, "Asean's Approach to Myanmar," *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies* 18, no. 1/2 (2014).

[173] Maung Aung Myoe, "Myanmar's Foreign Policy under the Usdp Government: Continuities and Changes," *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 35, no. 1 (2016)., 142-145.

[174] "Myanmar Trade Summary 2015 Data," (World Bank Group, 2019).

[175] "Intra-Asean Trade, 2010-2013," (Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of International Trade and Industry, 2013).

[176] "Intra- and Extra-Asean Trade, 2015," ed. ASEAN Statistics (Association od Southeast Asian Nations, 2016).

improving international relations, the USDP managed to foster trust and initiate bilateral peace agreements. Even careful talks about a federal union were held. However, simultaneously the military operations in the north intensified and the Tatmadaw made it clear that federalism is not an option. Together with growing suspicion about growing Buddhist nationalism, ongoing land grabbing and adherence to the concept of "national races", the USDP did not provide a climate for trustful cooperation. A nationwide agreement, signed by all parties would have been necessary. Yet, amplified by the military operation and categorical exclusion of some EAO's many groups feared a "divide and rule" approach by an USDP-Tatmadaw alliance. Thus, peace talks never culminated in a comprehensive, nationwide ceasefire agreement. The Thein Sein government indeed crafted a nationwide ceasefire agreement, yet multiple EAOs dropped out of the negotiations. With the looming NLD victory, many insurgents later intended to wait for a change of government. Thein Sein's efforts, eventually leading to some peace treaties, were still considered as steps into the right direction, despite the fact that military behaviour led to a severe re-escalation of fighting in northern areas.[177]

3.2.4 STANCE TOWARDS CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

Thein Sein and other government officials expressed their support for constitutional amendments that would restrict the military's influence and remove its ability to veto. The Tatmadaw, however, emphasized that a dilution of its role was not an option. Thus, no constitutional changes were made.[178] This indicates that the last word in constitutional matters remained with the military. Approving changes, knowing that they would not be implemented either way, nevertheless proved to be a convenient way to suggest independence from the military leadership.

The civilian government under Thein Sein was far from independent in its decision-making. First of all, Thein Sein progressed from a career in the military junta into the political office as president. As former general of the Burmese army, first secretary of the SPDC and prime minister, he remained tightly connected to the military leadership and acted only with their approval. Secondly, Tatmadaw generals occupied all central posts in the government such as Speaker of the lower house and vice president. In total 85 percent of the ministerial cabinet were former military officers or SPDC officials with military background. Similarly, all but one Chief Ministers of the country's decentralised states were retired senior army officers or even

---

[177] "Beyond Panglong: Myanmar's National Peace and Reform Dilemma.", 17-26.
[178] Pedersen, "Myanmar in 2014:'Tacking against the Wind'.", 225.

still in active duty.[179] Lastly, the military, still free from legal persecution, remains in charge of internal security issues and controls national and local parliaments through reserved seats until today.[180] With such a majority of former brass, policies against the military's interests were more than unlikely. Consequently, the USPD government from 2011 to 2016 is considered a mere proxy of military leadership as their positions did not diverge significantly.

3.2.5 JUSTIFYING ACTOR SELECTION

Although USDP and military did not have to endure the extensive scrutiny, evaluation and criticism as Aung San Suu Kyi does, both were forced to satisfy their constituency and act in the interest of their main supporters. This caused the USDP government to turn a blind eye to the preaching of radical monks and later gave in to their demands. Islamophobia and first outbursts of communal violence occurred under Thein Sein's presidency. After all, the public, media and politicians experienced new liberties after the junta transformed into the armed forces and a political party. In the new democratic environment, competition for public favour became more important than before and freedom of speech facilitated the spread of radical views. It is therefore vital to include the ruling party's and president's stance on Rohingya into the analysis in order to assess to what extend the USDP contributed to condemnation of Rohingya and subsequent discrimination. In order to assess the civil government's position it will be necessary to initially have a look statements uttered by Thein Sein on important occasions and supplement these by opinions of other members of his government. Furthermore, reactions to growing public pressure and islamophobia as well as interaction with other societal actors will be included. The focus of this assessment is to work out whether these pressures translated into discriminatory policies.

3.3 AUNG SAN SUU KYI AND THE NLD

After boycotting the 2010 elections and gaining traction in the 2012 by-election, the NLD won a landmark victory and absolute majority in the 2015 election. Suu Kyi's reputation and iconic status ensured the party's success and popularity.[181] Despite continuous reform,

---

[179] Egreteau, "The Continuing Political Salience of the Military in Post-Spdc Myanmar.", 267-268.

[180] Bertil Lintner, "The Military's Still in Charge: Why Reform in Burma Is Only Skin-Deep," Foreign Policy, https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/07/09/the-militarys-still-in-charge/.

[181] Kyaw Kyaw, "Analysis of Myanmar's Nld Landslide " New Mandala, http://www.newmandala.org/analysis-of-myanmars-nld-landslide/.

economic growth and efforts in the peace process, the country still faces a myriad of economic and societal problems, which have to be addressed. Continued military influence and grasp over numerous economic sectors remains, corruption is overlooked, inadequate infrastructure is hampering progress and the economy heavily relies on FDI and the agricultural sector.[182] If nothing else, the reliance on loyalty and hierarchy and the resulting lack of expertise in the civil service sector and mid-level government.[183] A major task is to disconnect military seniors from wielding power and influence in the economy and strengthen the executive and legislative in the country as well as granting civil liberties. Apart from that, a successful peace process is crucial to Suu Kyi's success.[184] Lastly, the humanitarian crisis in Rakhine state has severely damaged Suu Kyi's image. Though proposing ambitious plans for the country's development, the NLD has struggled to put their words into action. In sum, Suu Kyi had to act on all fronts. While doing so she faced diminishing popular support, a fragile alliance with the Tatmadaw and a full-grown humanitarian crisis.

3.3.1 ECONOMIC REFORMS

After leaving office, Thein Sein left a slowing economy that was just in the process of marketization and opening up to foreign investors. The NLD, intending to continue liberalisation, identified some key issues that had to be addressed. A 12-point plan proposed to tackle corruption, reform state enterprises, regulate resource extraction, form a private sector, develop infrastructure, support agriculture, improve human capital, tackle unemployment and build a financial system that can provide credits and attract FDI.[185] But so far concrete reforms to achieve these goals are missing and the country consequently suffers from declining investments.[186] The NLD indeed introduced revised registration fees for private and public companies, a new investment law, allowed foreign insurance companies and modernised

---

[182] Kristian Stokke, Roman Vakulch, and Indra Øverland, "Myanmar: A Political Economy Analysis," (Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2018).

[183] Tej Parikh, "Without State Reform, Myanmar Isn't Going Anywhere Fast," The Diplomat, https://thediplomat.com/2018/06/without-state-reform-myanmar-isnt-going-anywhere-fast/.

[184] Priscilla A Clapp, *Securing a Democratic Future for Myanmar* (Council on Foreign Relations Press, 2016)., 8-18.

[185] Aye Thidar Kyaw and Clare Hammond, "Government Reveals 12-Point Economic Policy," The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/business/21664-nld-12-point-economic-policy-announcement.html.

[186] Yuichi Nitta, "Two Years on, Myanmar's Lack of Reform Turns Investors Away," Nikkei Asian Review, https://asia.nikkei.com/Economy/Two-years-on-Myanmar-s-lack-of-reform-turns-investors-away.

customs,[187] built roads, bridges and increased spending on education and health.[188] Yet, the reforms fell far from what is necessary to modernise the economy crippled by lack of infrastructure, skilled labour and possibilities to invest. The Global competitiveness report lists Myanmar on rank 131 out of 140 countries. In all indicators, including infrastructure and education it is surpassed by nearby countries such as Bangladesh, Lao PDR and Vietnam.[189] Despite these missed opportunities, Myanmar has continuously been among Southeast Asia's most rapidly growing countries and has increased its total GDP between 2015 and 2017 for more than 16 percent.[190] Not living up to the promise of economic advancement caused a sinking confidence in the country's course and waning confidence in democracy.[191]

3.3.2 FOREIGN RELATIONS

Upon taking office, Aung San Suu Kyi vowed to improve relations with its neighbours and the international community. Overall, Myanmar-ASEAN relations have initially improved and the country benefitted from bilateral partnerships and development cooperation.[192] The country's inter-ASEAN trade, however, has decreased by 16.5% in the year following Suu Kyi's inauguration. Indicating just a temporary drawback Myanmar's inter-ASEAN trade has recovered to its previous volume in 2017. Currently Myanmar's trade with ASEAN countries makes up about one third of its total trade.[193] In a 2018 ASEAN Business in Investment Summit, Suu Kyi encouraged ASEAN members to invest in Myanmar's priority sectors of agriculture and agricultural services.[194] Her strategy to attract FDI from ASEAN members seems to be successful. Intra-ASEAN FDI to Myanmar has increased from 52 Million in 2016 to 273 Million in 2017.[195] Yet the Rohingya crisis has divided the ASEAN community. Some countries such as Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand have been active in providing

---

[187] Aka Kyaw Min Maw, "Stability and Expectations: Economic Reform and the Nld Government," *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2018).

[188] U Kyaw Tint Swe, "Report on the Current Work of the Government: Political, Economic and Social Development, and the Peace Process," (Naypyidaw: The Republic Of The Union Of Myanmar President Office, 2018).

[189] "The Global Competitiveness Report," ed. Klaus Schwab (Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2015)., 8-11.

[190] "World Bank Open Data."

[191] "Survey of Burma/Myanmar - Public Opinion," (Center For Insights in Survey Research, 2017)., 5, 21.

[192] Aung Shin, "Suu Kyi Strengthens Ties with Asean and China," The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/opinion/24927-suu-kyi-strengthens-ties-with-asean-and-china.html.

[193] *Asean Statistical Yearbook 2018*, (Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, 2018)., 59.

[194] Kang Wan Chern and Htin Lynn Aung, "Daw Suu Pitches Myanmar to Asean, Vows to Improve Business Environment," The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/news/daw-suu-pitches-myanmar-asean-vows-improve-business-environment.html.

[195] *Asean Statistical Yearbook 2018*., 144.

humanitarian assistance, while Malaysia has condemned Naypyidaw's action. In this matter, Suu Kyi has relied too much on the ASEAN's principle of non-interference and missed genuine chances to benefit from aid by experienced ASEAN allies.[196]

The unfolding of a humanitarian crisis in Rakhine also strained the country's relationship with its neighbour Bangladesh and other Muslims countries such as Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and Qatar. The EU and US maintain their efforts to facilitate trade, development and democratic reforms in the country. Although the western countries condemned the Rakhine State crisis and criticised Aung San Suu Kyi for her passiveness, their sanctions mainly target the Tatmadaw and some generals individually.[197] [198] Apart from that, Myanmar tries to balance its relations with it powerful neighbours India and China. India and Myanmar cooperate in security operations and have a frequent exchange of high-level officials. Thus India is involved in negotiating Myanmar's internal ceasefire agreements and supports Bangladesh and Myanmar in their negotiations over a repatriation of Rohingya.

Indian economic development projects proceed to advance internet connectivity in Myanmar and infrastructure to create a link between India, Myanmar and its eastern ASEAN neighbours. China, Myanmar's largest trade partner, unbrokenly invests in infrastructure, especially in projects that facilitate the extraction of oil and gas and allow China to transport resources on land routes, bypassing the Strait of Malacca.[199] Regarding the Rakhine State Crisis, Chinese officials side with Myanmar and try to take an active stance, partially to secure the investments in Rakhine's pipelines and ports and partially to taunt the West's lack of concrete action.[200]

3.3.3 STRATEGY FOR ETHNIC RECONCILIATION

Ethnic peace is a central element of Suu Kyi's campaign as well as the core of the NLD government. However, the peace process is hampered by nature of the new government. When power was transformed to the NLD, the government, in effect, turned into a hybrid government

---

[196] The Myanmar Times, "Myanmar's 2018 Foreign Policy Outlook," The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/news/myanmars-2018-foreign-policy-outlook.html.

[197] Christina Fink, "Myanmar in 2017: Insecurity and Violence," *Asian Survey* 58, no. 1 (2018)., 163-165.

[198] "Eu-Myanmar Relations," in *Factsheets* (Bruxelles: European External Action Service, 2018).

[199] Viraj Solanki, "India Boosts Relations with Myanmar, Where Chinese Influence Is Growing," The International Institutie for Strategic Studies, https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2018/05/india-myanmar-china-relations.

[200] Mikaila Smith, "The Nuances of Win-Win: China-Myanmar Relations in 2018," China-United States Exchange Foundation, https://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/the-nuances-of-win-win-china-myanmar-relations-in-2018.

- 60 -

of two competing Bamar-majority groups – the military and the democrats. Due to the military's control over internal security and veto power over in the parliament, concessions can only be achieved through cooperation. Thus, in order to advance ethnic reconciliation and constitutional change, the NLD has to handle the military with kid gloves. The NLD revived the ideas of a federal union during the 21st Century Panglong Conferences, with Suu Kyi clearly advocating a federalism. The 2017 and 2018 "Union Peace Conference 21st Century Panglong" saw an increased number of ethnic armed groups signing the Nationwide Ceasefire Accord. [201] Apart from that, informal engagement with non-signatories of ceasefire agreements has improved.[202] Nevertheless, the progress is far from smooth and still obstructed by the different strategies of government and military. The military refused to abolish the NCA as a basis for further dialogue, excluding certain EAOs from the negotiations. Additionally it insists in constitutional principles, such as non-disintegration of the union and a key role for the military in the government. It furthermore sustained operations in northern areas. As a result, the commitments of the NLD to a federal union remained superficial and major EAOs resigned from the NCA, slowing the peace process' momentum.[203] Eventually, the 21st Century Panglong Conferences are a crucial step and important platform for dialogue. Yet they remain inconsequential, as important actors as excluded and key issues such as decentralisation, federalism and right to secession are not touched upon until this day.[204]

3.3.4 STANCE ON CONSTITUTIONAL CHANGE

During the 2015 election campaign, the NLD promised to improve the country's checks and balances as well as independence of state institutions. A great deal of these promises revolve around amendments to the constitution. The party's manifesto envisions a constitution "in accordance with basic human rights and democratic standards"[205] and a guarantee for ethnic rights and the establishment of a federal union. [206] The party does not openly demand a disenfranchisement of the military, yet it calls for "the Tatmadaw and institutions of national

---

[201] Song Qingrun, "Second Panglong Conference Sees Significant Breakthroughs," Mizzima, http://www.mizzima.com/news-opinion/second-panglong-conference-sees-significant-breakthroughs.
[202] Sai Wansai, "Evaluation of the Third 21st Century Panglong Conference: More Informal Engagement Than Official Meetings?," https://english.panglong.org/2018/07/16/evaluation-of-the-third-21st-century-panglong-conference-more-informal-engagement-than-official-meetings/.
[203] "Beyond Panglong: Myanmar's National Peace and Reform Dilemma.", 26-36.
[204] The Myanmar Times, "Third Panglong: Was It a Success? ," The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/news/third-panglong-was-it-success.html.
[205]"National League for Democracy - 2015 Election Manifesto," (National League For Democracy, 2015)., 6
[206] Ibid., 6.

defence coming under the aegis of the executive branch."[207] Regarding constitutional change, the NLD has so far foundered on the military's veto power. Previous attempts to lower the threshold of acceptance for constitutional amendments, effectively depriving the military of its veto power have failed.[208] Thus, constitutional change is in a stalemate, with the ruling party being powerless to initiate it, and the veto power determined to preserve its power, refers the 2008 military-drafted constitution. Consequently, the NLD postponed their efforts to an undefined future and hopes for a change of mind among the military.

3.3.5 Suu Kyi's political philosophy

Aung San Suu Kyi stood at the forefront of the Burmese opposition decades before becoming State Counsellor .Since the early days, she has embedded moral and pacifism into Burmese politics. Prior to the democratic transition Suu Kyi incorporated Buddhist values in her political philosophy in order to transmit the idea of liberal democracy to the public. Appealing to Buddhist duties of a ruler and concepts of morality, justice, compassion and learning allowed her to criticise the military rule and successfully combine politics and Buddhist though in a political concept.[209] Following the ideals of a good Buddhist ruler, who serves as guardian of the religion and its followers, Suu Kyi was able to portray the NLD as the legitimate ruler of the country, due to its moral superiority.[210] She later focused on the concept of *metta*, loving kindness and compassion through meditation, which she saw absent in the military's leadership.[211] Her political philosophy relies heavily on reconciliation instead of acting out anger and revenge. Particularly her failure to express sympathy with Muslims damaged her moral credibility and led to harsh criticism on her leadership style and policies.

3.3.6 Suu Kyi's leadership style

The government is severely limited in its abilities by Suu Kyi's autocratic leadership style. Her associates describe her as a micromanager, who seeks control over any governmental issue. Even the formal presidents act on her behalf. Her strict leadership and loyalty-based

---

[207] Ibid., 8.

[208] Sithu Aung Myint, "The Nld Duped Again on Constitution," The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/opinion/15181-the-nld-duped-again-on-constitution.html.

[209] Stephen McCarthy, "The Buddhist Political Rhetoric of Aung San Suu Kyi," *Contemporary Buddhism* 5, no. 2 (2004)., 72-75.

[210] Ibid., 79.

[211] Ibid., 75-78.

system discourages criticism and exploitation of defamation laws against dissidents has occurred.[212] Above all, great parts of the high-level positions in her cabinet are occupied by loyalists, who lack experience and skills. Concentration of decision-making in top-levels has caused middle level management and civil service to stagnate. As a result vast parts of the government lack experience, skills and technical expertise.[213] Suu Kyi's desire to have extensive supervision also affects civil society organisations in Myanmar. More than the Thein Sein government, the NLD increased mechanisms of oversight and control through the need for registrations and permissions. Scoring a landmark electoral victory "the party seems to read a strong popular mandate and legitimacy to realise its own vision for change when in government."[214] Consequently, the cooperation between CSOs and governmental organs is hampered by mistrust and lack of communication. Government officials lack skills and experience to engage with civil society and form an effective alliance. Instead, they fear to be co-opted or overly influenced by civil actors.[215] This has driven CSOs to focus on high-funded missions, backed by international donors. Consequently, they depart from political lobbying into implementation of prestigious projects. This furthermore raises the government's suspicion of civil society as actors who might represent foreign interests.[216] Despite the government's preference to exclude CSOs from political lobbying or advocacy as well as increased surveillance and aggravated registration processes, the number of CSOs has continuously been growing.[217]

3.3.7 CHALLENGES TO SUU KYI AND THE NLD

The NLD has not been as effective as expected in addressing issues of ethnic reconciliation, civil liberties, economic development and disempowerment of the Tatmadaw. To some extent, the democratic party has proved more restrictive than its military predecessor. As a result, confidence in democratic institutions is shrinking as a growing number of Burmese considers them unable to maintain law and order.[218] Similarly, a federal union, frequently

---

[212] Poppy McPherson, "Aung San Suu Kyi: Myanmar's Great Hope Fails to Live up to Expectations " The Guardian, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/31/aung-san-suu-kyi-myanmars-great-hope-fails-to-live-up-to-expectations.
[213] Parikh, "Without State Reform, Myanmar Isn't Going Anywhere Fast".
[214] Stefan Bächthold, "An Eclipse of Myanmar's Civil Society?," Heinrich Böll Stiftung, https://www.boell.de/en/2017/07/05/eclipse-myanmars-civil-society.
[215] Mindy Walker, "Civil Society in Myanmar's New Democracy," in *World Learning, Myanmar* (Yangon: Institute For Political and Civic Engagements, 2017)., 8-11.
[216] Bächthold, "An Eclipse of Myanmar's Civil Society?".
[217] "Unlocking Civil Society and Peace in Myanmar," (Yangon: Paung Sie Facility, 2018).
[218] "Survey of Burma/Myanmar - Public Opinion.", 21.

advocated by Aung San Suu Kyi seems to have little support.[219] Three quarters of the population still believe the country is on a positive course, but the tendency is falling. Sceptics name deficits in economic development and ethnic violence and terrorism as the reason. [220] Burmese still live in fear of political persecution. Only 37% are convinced that no one is afraid to openly express political views. A slightly smaller percentage is of the opposite opinion and claims that most are afraid to do so. [221] Their concerns are confirmed by an increased of misuse of defamation laws such as the Article 66 of the communications law. Comparted to the previous government, the cases of alleged defamation against dissident journalists, politicians or human rights defenders has increased. Free Expression Myanmar reports that these accusations are mostly filed by powerful public figures against those who criticise them. [222] To facilitate nationwide harmony and thwart religious extremists, the NLD revised laws against hate speech. Legal analysts warn that the new "Interfaith Harmonious Coexistence Law" endangers the freedom of speech it is supposed to protect. It allows censorship by government authorities and lacks clear definitions of minority groups that need protection, as well as methods for independent persecution of individuals who incite genocide.[223]

In addition to laws against hate speech, the NLD increased measures to contain Ma Ba Tha and to prevent the politicisation and exploitation of religion. Despite these efforts and various internal criticism,[224] The NLD has not repealed the discriminatory "race and religion" laws, avoiding collision course with the influential Ma Ba Tha.[225] On the positive site, legal prosecution of extremist monks has been increased, leading to a ban of Wirathu from giving sermons and an imprisonment ex-monk Parmaukkha for organising unauthorised protests against the use of the word "Rohingya". [226] It furthermore urged the Sangha (MaHaNa), the state's Buddhist authority, to oppose Ma Ba Tha. In May 2017, the Sangha declared that Ma Ba Tha was not founded in accordance with official religious directives of Myanmar. This

---

[219] Ibid., 31.

[220] Ibid., 5, 7.

[221] Ibid., 23.

[222] "66(D): No Real Change: An Analysis of Complaints Made before and after the 2017 Legal Amendment," (Free Expression Myanmar, 2017)., 2.

[223] Article 19, "Myanmar: Interfaith Harmonious Coexistence Bill (3rd Version)," in *Legal Analysis* (London: Article 19, 2017).

[224] Nyan Hlaing Lynn, "Tensions Ahead over 'Race and Religion' Laws," Frontier Myanmar, https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/tensions-ahead-over-changes-to-race-and-religion-laws.

[225] Fiona MacGregor and Thu Thu Aung, "New Govt to Defend 'Race and Religion' Laws at Un Meeting," The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/21218-new-govt-to-defend-race-and-religion-laws-at-un-meeting.html.

[226] Tin Aung Khine, "Myanmar's Religion Ministry Must 'Take Responsibility' for Rabble-Rousing Monks: Interview," Radio Free Asia, https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/myanmars-religion-ministry-must-take-responsibility-for-rabble-rousing-monks-interview-02282018160726.html.

means that Ma Ba Tha cannot operate under the name and image of an official religious body.[227] Consequently, Ma Ba Tha lost its religious credibility and has to remove its billboards, but is likely to reform as a civil organisation. The organisation is currently in the process of setting up a political party. The Burmese Union Election Committee however rejected their efforts because some members of the forming party are not in compliance with the Political Parties Registration Law.[228]

The peace process with ethnic armies divides the NLD and military forces. Intrinsically, both have the same goal: to persuade more ethnic armed organisations to join the Nationwide Ceasefire Accord. However, both camps (NLD and Tatmadaw) have a different approach to achieve cooperation. While the military modernises its forces and is determined to pressure rebels to join negotiations by extending military offensives, the NLD promotes that the military should refrain from interfering in national and ethnic affairs in order to be able to solve grudges via negotiations.[229] Regardless of its commitment to federalism and minority rights, the NLD government has failed to credibly deal with numerous concerns of ethnic minorities, demilitarize some of the conflicts and limit ongoing military operations in the north. So far, the NLD has also been unsuccessful in exerting influence on military operations or to provide mechanisms of accountability. A growing share of Burmese today favours a hard-line approach, approving the military's actions. Furthermore, a lack of criticism on the armed forces is grounded in a fear that condemnation might damage the fragile relations between Tatmadaw and the civil government.[230]In this climate, peace talks and the Panglong Conference loose its credibility. The NLD-led government moreover continues with the Burmanisation by expunging non-Burmans from the country's history records, covering their ethnic ethnicities or by spreading national symbols in areas inhabited by minority groups.[231] In total, military operations, ongoing Burmanisation and the NLD's refusal to field Muslim candidates in the

---

[227] Matthew J Walton, "Misunderstanding Myanmar's Ma Ba Tha," Asia Times, http://www.atimes.com/article/misunderstanding-myanmars-ma-ba-tha/.

[228] Htet Naing Zaw, "Nationalist Group Members' Bid to Form Political Party Rejected," The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/nationalist-group-members-bid-form-political-party-rejected.html.

[229] Lawi Weng, "On Armed Forces Day, One Holiday, Two Visions," The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/armed-forces-day-one-holiday-two-visions.html.

[230] "Ethnic Groups Have Lost Faith in the Nld," The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/ethnic-groups-lost-faith-nld.html.

[231] Matthew J Walton, "Has the Nld Learned Nothing About Ethnic Concerns?," The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/has-the-nld-learned-nothing-about-ethnic-concerns.html.

2015 election[232] have caused a significant loss of support by ethnic minority groups and damage to the credibility of the Panglong Conferences.

The government finds itself in a position where it has foster development and a positive image while balancing the interests of military, the Buddhist majority and ethnic minorities. Societal and military pressure becomes obvious when looking at the case of U Ko Ni. The Muslim lawyer served as a legal advisor to the NLD and had a substantial role in creating Aung San Su Kyi's position as State Counsellor. Apart from that, he criticised the military's influence in parliament and power to prevent amendments to the constitution, the flawed citizenship law, as well as the NLD's rejection to field any Muslim candidates in the 2015 elections. U Ko Ni was shot by a hired assassin in the beginning of 2017 in broad daylight. Melissa Crouch deduces that his assassination was a symbolic act not only to "silence those seeking to advocate greater equality and protection for minorities"[233] and a warning to those involved in laying out plans to challenge the militaries authority.[234] Although it remains unclear which forces are involved in the assassination, the case shows that potential to violently shut down dissidents exists, especially if they criticise the military, stand up for minorities or advocate a change of the constitution. It furthermore shows that the ruling party is not fully able to control these forces and guarantee a safe environment for political opposition (or has only limited intend to do so)

In sum, the NLD has to cope with internal pressures from various sides. It has to satisfy the constituencies' demands for economic development while balancing between the demands of ethnic minorities as well as the Bamar majority. In this course, harassment of dissidents is increasing. Religious groups and military stay important players. The former with the potential to mobilise concerned Buddhists, and the latter as a key player in the peace process and national political institutions.

3.3.8 JUSTIFYING ACTOR SELECTION

Aung San Suu Kyi is the central element of the NLD in various aspects. She is virtually an idol and enjoys a high reputation and moral authority nationally and internationally. Her

---

[232] Hanna Hindstrom, "Nld Blocked Muslim Candidates to Appease Ma Ba Tha: Party Member," The Irrawaddy, http://www.irrawaddy.com/election/news/nld-blocked-muslim-candidates-to-appease-ma-ba-tha-party-member.

[233] Melissa Crouch, "Democracy and Peace Frustrated in Myanmar: Remembering U Ko Ni," Lowy Institute (The Interpreter), https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/democracy-and-peace-frustrated-myanmar-remembering-u-ko-ni.

[234] Ibid.

outstanding reputation and prominence, the fact that the presidents execute her ideas and the nomination of loyal followers into ministerial posts make her opinion and expressions representative of the NLD government's political attitude. Based on her outstanding reputation, it can be assumed that Suu Kyi's stance on Rohingya influences public opinion. If not agreed upon, it sparks discussion and shows the degree of antagonism between the central government and chauvinist religious actors. Religious extremists usually criticised her moderate statements and accused her of neglecting Buddhists. Thus, it will be vital to assess her statements on Rohingya and religious forces urged her to take a more hard-line approach.

Previously Suu Kyi was the leading figure of Myanmar's democracy movement and fierce critic of the military and the previous governments. As state chancellor, she is now de-facto leader of the country and the reform process. As these two positions are different in nature and require different styles of public behaviour, especially when talking about minority rights. Suu Kyi's position towards minorities and Rohingya will be separated into her period as political opponent during democratisation and as a de-facto leader. In the opposition, she was very vocal for human rights and constitutional amendments. As head of state, she failed to speak out credibly for Rohingya. Moreover, the NLD government gave free reign to the Tatmadaw and eventually tolerated the anti-terrorist operations in 2016 and 2017.

3.4 RAKHINE PARTIES

The Rakhine parties ANP and RNDP are a product of political competition on state level and the national stage. They shaped their image as ethnic parties, advocating the concerns of ethnic Rakhine people. By doing so, they confronted or lobbied the central government, but also substantially utilised anti-Muslim sentiments. In parts, they overlap with the ideology of nationalist Buddhists, resulting in a successful linkage and alliance of the two actors. The ANP furthermore established itself as the third strongest party in the national parliaments. In order to assess the parties' traits and political orientation, it will initially be necessary to give an overview over the circumstances in Rakhine State.

3.4.1 BACKGROUND TO RAKHINE STATE

Rakhine State, like many other regions in Myanmar, has its own distinctive dynamics and contentions. Ongoing conflicts in the state are often perceived as a conflict in which state

and Buddhists side against Rohingya.[235] However, an alliance of Rakhine people and central government is far from existent. The conflict is triangular in nature, involving the state, Rohingya and Rakhine people as competing groups. The democratic transition in Myanmar allowed ethno-nationalist argumentation to gain prominence and is thus a catalyst, which unearthed simmering xenophobia, perceived discrimination and hyper-nationalist sentiments.

Ethnic Rakhine consider themselves a persecuted minority, which is exposed to external domination, by Burmese as well as foreign powers. Ethnic Rakhine report a poverty rate more than twice as high as the national average, cases of human rights abuses, arbitrary land confiscation economic marginalisation and limited freedoms to express culture and participate in politics. Due to continuing oppression and negligence, ethnic Rakhine foresee a demographic shift in favour of local Muslims as well as continued exploitation by military or Burman-affiliated companies. [236] Additional resentments are caused by the perception that profit generated in Rakhine is shared between Naypyidaw and foreign companies.[237] Thus, local population and politicians are usually averse towards the central government.

Together with limited access to politics and a powerless local parliament,[238] political campaigning in Rakhine facilitated the deepening of pre-existing ethnic cleavages. Aversions towards Rohingya are rooted in Rakhine's history and the belief that Rohingya are illegal Bengali immigrants with no valid claim over the land. These feelings were amplified through the recent suspicions of an expensive Islam in the area. The central government furthermore purposefully manipulated the Rakhine population into believing that "Bengalis" are the problem, in order to create a distraction from ongoing land grabbing or to continue with projects like the oil and gas pipelines.[239] These sentiments are deliberately cultivated and exploited by chauvinist actors. In their course of guarding the well-being of Rakhine ethnics, they demand more autonomy and control over resource revenues in Rakhine state, but also swore to protect the land from allegedly invasive Muslims.

During Myanmar's transition to democracy, many factors contributed to the rise of local these ethno-nationalist forces. The newly gained freedom of speech and assembly as well as growing access to cell phones and internet led to an increased spread of controversial opinions and rumours and the emergence of chauvinistic Buddhist monks. Slow withdrawal of

---

[235] Leider, "'The Frictions in the Rakhine State Are Less About Islamophobia Than Rohingya-Phobia'."

[236] "Myanmar: The Politics of Rakhine State.", 14-15.

[237] "Towards a Peaceful, Fair and Prosperous Future for the People of Rakhine," (Yangon: Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, 2017)., 22.

[238] Ibid., 46.

[239] MacManus, Green, and de la Cour Venning, *Countdown to Annihilation: Genocide in Myanmar*., 31.

military forces negatively affected local security and contributed to outbreaks of violence in 2012 and 2013 (see Fig.4). With a growing number of violent incidents involving Rohingya since 2012, the Rakhine population became more susceptible to populist argumentation and nationalists sentiments. Along the political opening came expectations of development, which were not met in Rakhine state. Finally, newly created state-level parliaments created hopes for more autonomy and increased control over regional resources,[240] hopes that became essential part of campaigning in Rakhine State. Open competition for seats in the local parliament was dominated by actors who hope to secure voters through arguing for the dominance of Rakhine over supposedly their territory.

3.4.2 ANP AND RNDP

Claims of nativity and associated right to rule translated into the conceptualisation of Rakhine parties. These stand out due to their patronisation of one certain ethnicity, exclusion of others, appeal to ethnocentric fears and the conviction that a self-identifying ethnic nation should have the right to govern itself.[241] As a great deal of the campaigning revolved around the right to administer the group's homeland, the Rakhine parties especially targeted Rohingya as illegal immigrants with no right to claim territory or political participation. Labelling Rohingya as threats furthermore served local politicians to strengthen group identities and secure support from the Rakhine ethnicity. Both RNDP and ANP, feeding popular anti-Muslim sentiments, deployed nationalist rhetoric, resembling Nazi-ideology, in favour of concentration camps, genocide and extremist means to protect the race.[242]

Defying legal obstacles for opposition parties and minimal funding,[243] the nationalistic Rakhine Nationals Development Party (RNDP) secured 18 seats in the Rakhine state parliament in the 2010 election. Technically the strongest party, they were opposed by the USDP, which gained 16 seats on top of the 12 seats that were reserved for the military.[244] Consequently, the RNDP's efforts aimed at mobilizing the last voters or disenfranchising opponents in order to

---

[240] Burke, "New Political Space, Old Tensions: History, Identity and Violence in Rakhine State, Myanmar."

[241] Naveeda Hussain, "Federalism, Freedom and Fear-Mongering: Democratization and Violent Conflict in Rakhine State, Myanmar," *The Kiessling Papers*, no. December 2017 (2017)., 18-20.

[242] MacManus, Green, and de la Cour Venning, *Countdown to Annihilation: Genocide in Myanmar*., 45.

[243] Michael F. Martin, "Burma's 2010 Elections: Implications of the
New Constitution and Election Laws " in *CSR Reports for Congress* (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2010).

[244] RJ Vogt and Khin Zaw, "State/Region Hluttaw Results: Graphics," The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/17642-state-and-region-hluttaw-results-graphics.html#.Vkv0mC4cAfw.twitter.

secure the looming majority. The RNDP decided a merger with the smaller Arakan League for Democracy (ALD) in 2013 to form the Arakan National Party in (ANP) in order strengthen its punch in representing the Rakhine interest against the central government, illegal immigrants and "Muslim threat".[245] In the 2015 election, Rakhine state was one of the regions where the NLD could not gain a majority. The ANP again fell only one seat short of an outright majority in Rakhine State.[246] The central NLD government nevertheless appointed an NLD politician as head of the state government in Sittwe. This decision was heavily objected by the ANP,[247] but eventually it confirmed their narrative of Rakhine people under foreign domination.

3.4.3 STANCE TOWARDS ETHNIC RECONCILIATION

In the discourse on ethnic reconciliation, the ANP has stressed the need to work towards the creation of a genuine federal union with the broad inclusion of ethnic forces. It identified long-lasting absence of equality and self-determination among Myanmar's ethnic groups as the root of ongoing conflict. The ANP, siding with other minority parties, thus advocates the implementation of improved political representation and self-determination of Myanmar's minority groups. The party is however primarily concerned with appropriate representation of Rakhine nationalities, which it perceives as supressed, excluded and exploited and logically mostly lobbies on behalf of the "Rakhine nationals".[248] ANP vice chairperson Daw Aye Nu Sein has during the latest Panglong Conference sharply criticised the NLD government for poor administration and lopsided development between the central state and the periphery and thus exacerbating conflict of minorities and the centre.[249]

3.4.4 LINKAGE WITH THE LOCAL POPULATION

The Rakhine parties strive for a close relation with the local population, religious groups and CSOs. From the first local elections until now, they organise multilateral meetings with

---

[245] Burke, "New Political Space, Old Tensions: History, Identity and Violence in Rakhine State, Myanmar.", 286.
[246] David Scott Mathieson, "The Electoral Aftermath in Rakhine State," Human Rights Watch, https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/06/electoral-aftermath-rakhine-state-0.
[247] Narinjara News, "Arakan Government to Be Led by Nld Lawmaker," Narinjara News, http://narinjara.com/arakan-government-to-be-led-by-nld-lawmaker/.
[248] The Global New Light of Myanmar, "Arakan National Party Presents Policy, Stance and Work Program," The Global New Light of Myanmar, http://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/arakan-national-party-presents-policy-stance-and-work-program/.
[249] "Anp Vice Chair Delivers Address at 21st Century Panglong 3rd Session," *The Global New Light of Myanmar*, 07.12 2018.

local actors to exchange opinions and work out a mutual statements.[250] Apart from civil actors, the ANP also directly engaged with the military leadership and successfully advocated to ramp up military presence for the protection of the Rakhine ethnics.[251]

Lack of contact with international actors and reluctance to challenge dominant narratives cause a homogenous opinion on key issues among Rakhine civil actors and parties.[252] Unsurprisingly, politicians avoid engaging with incompatible organisations. Rakhine parties mistrust international aid organisations and investigative commissions. They criticise a biased involvement in internal affairs, which will work towards granting Rohingya extensive civil rights. The ANP thus opposed the government-appointed Rakhine commission led by Kofi Annan.[253] Pointing to the underdeveloped living-conditions, the ANP laments a help bias by humanitarian aid organisations, which resonates among the Rakhine population and causes occasional mobs that obstruct foreign aid missions.[254]

Political campaigning in Myanmar relies heavily on personal presence of candidates, flyers, pamphlets and posters. During campaigning, the ANP has reportedly overstated an alleged Muslim threat and utilised ethno-nationalism and xenophobia, especially among uneducated villagers.[255] The undertone of the Rakhine parties has become more refined with growing experience. While early slogans openly called for ethnic purity,[256] the latest campaign slogan, in contrast, was, "Be affectionate, be harmonious and be united."[257]

---

[250] Kyaw Lwin Oo, Kyaw Thu, and Min Thein, "Rakhine Political Parties to Meet over Myanmar Official's Remarks on Ethnic Army," Radio Free Asia, https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/rakhine-political-parties-to-meet-01092019163358.html.

[251] "Myanmar (Burma): Analysis: Myanmar Army Deployed in Maungdaw," *Asia News Monitor*, August 15, 2017 2017.

[252] "Myanmar: The Politics of Rakhine State.", 16.

[253] "Myanmar's Rakhine Advisory Commission Meets with Top Leaders, Lawmakers," (Washington: Federal Information & News Dispatch, Inc., 2016).

[254] Wa Lone and Andrew R.C. Marschall, "Buddhist Mistrust of Foreign Aid Workers Hampers Relief for Myanmar's Rohingya," Reuters, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-aid/buddhist-mistrust-of-foreign-aid-workers-hampers-relief-for-myanmars-rohingya-idUSKCN1BY0BZ.

[255] Kyaw Mratt Thu, "Why Did Aye Maung Win in Ann?," Frontier Myanmar, https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/why-did-aye-maung-win-in-ann.

[256] Timothy Mclaughlin, "Rising Rakhine Party Looming Threat to Myanmar's Muslim Minority," Reuters, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-election-rohingya/rising-rakhine-party-looming-threat-to-myanmars-muslim-minority-idUSKCN0RV5RO20151001.

[257] San Maung Than, "Arakan National Party Starts by-Election Campaign in Rathedaung," Burma News International, https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/arakan-national-party-starts-election-campaign-rathedaung.

3.4.5 AFFILIATION WITH MILITANT GROUPS

Along with a great share Rakhine's population, local politicians support the Arakan Army (AA). The Arakan Army, a relatively small, armed group under patronage of the Northern Alliance, demands the liberation of Rakhine state from "Burmese fascism",[258] the self-determination for Arakan people and a preservation of their culture. The group has refused to accept the government's and military's conditions of an initial disarmament in order to join peace-making negotiations. It was thus only observer to the 21st Century Panglong Conference.[259] Beginning in 2013, Rakhine political leaders lobbied the previous government to create a "safe zone" in Rakhine that would allow the insurgents to resettle from Kachin state to their declared native land.[260] Former party chairman Aye Maung has reportedly expressed support for the armed resistance of Rakhine people.[261] Furthermore, members of the ANP openly supported the involvement of the AA in Burma's peace process. Moreover, some personal ties between the party and the armed group exists. San Kyaw Hla, ANP member and speaker of Rakhine's State parliament is the father-in-law of the AA's chief Tun Myat Naing.[262] The politicians' efforts to establish the insurgents as a negotiating party remained unsuccessful. The AA has recently been declared a terrorist organisation by the Burmese authorities, which entails the permission to carry out extensive operations against the rebel group.[263] When government officials denounced the AA as an ally of the Rohingya Salvation Army, the ANP issued a statement rejecting the claims.[264]

3.4.6 OPINION ON OTHER MUSLIMS

The ANP does not categorically consider Muslims as alien elements to Myanmar. Some members accept the Kaman Muslim minority as one of the country's ethnic groups and acknowledge their civil rights.[265] However, the ANP has, in its ethno-nationalist course, clearly

---

[258] David Scott Mathieson, "Shadowy Rebels Extend Myanmar's Wars," Asia Times, http://www.atimes.com/article/shadowy-rebels-extend-myanmars-wars/.
[259] Ibid.
[260] Ibid.
[261] "A New Dimension of Violence in Myanmar's Rakhine State ", in *Crisis Group Asia Briefing* (Brussels: International Crisis Group (ICG), 2019)., 6.
[262] Tun Myat Naing, interview by Nan Lwin Hnin Pwint, 5.10.2016, 2016.
[263] The Associated Press, "Myanmar Army Ordered to Take Offensive against Arakan Army," The Associated Press, https://www.apnews.com/3541e6892bab46399e8b424c8a1cd32b.
[264] Oo, Thu, and Thein, "Rakhine Political Parties to Meet over Myanmar Official's Remarks on Ethnic Army".
[265] Su Myat Mon, "The Kaman: Citizens Who Suffer," Frontier Myanmar, https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/the-kaman-citizens-who-suffer.

stated its goals as focused on the ethnic Rakhine and thus alienated the Kaman.[266] Despite the Kaman's official recognition as one of Myanmar's ethnic groups, Rakhine leaders and government are increasingly linking them to Bangladesh, establishing a concept of tolerated Muslim "guests" in the Buddhist host country. Thus, Kaman more than ever find themselves in a situation where they have to re-emphasise their indigeneity and loyalty to Myanmar.[267]

3.4.7 JUSTIFYING ACTOR SELECTION

The RNDP and ANP are extremely relevant actors in the politicisation of Islamophobia in Rakhine state. In an analysis of the conflict dynamics in a democratising country, they are insofar relevant as they formed under newly gained political freedoms and competition in the first place. They secondly built their ethno nationalist image around the allegedly hostile Rohingya. Their campaigning heavily relies on the defamation of Muslims but simultaneously unites ethnic Rakhine as a supposedly suppressed entity against the central government. While not solely relying on the narrative of a Muslim invasion, they also argue for self-determination and the Rakhine people's right to administer their homeland. Thirdly, Rakhine parties succeeded in connecting various civil and political actors and managed to drag religious issue on the political state under the guise of protecting Rakhine Buddhists. As well-established parties, both locally and nationwide, they were not only able to influence the central government, but also established a direct connection to the military. Despite not being the origin of Islamophobia, they surely contributed to the heated ethno nationalist climate in Rakhine in which hostilities towards other ethnicities could flourish.

Dr. Aye Maung, former chairman of both RNDP and ANP, became one of the prominent politicians arguing against the military, central government and Muslim population of Rakhine. He is therefore an initial point of departure for analysing Rakhine parties' political courses as well as the concern of the local ethnic groups. Many of his views were shared or spread by other important local politicians, such as San Kyaw Hla, speaker of the Rakhine State Department, or Kyaw Zaw Oo, vice president of the ANP.

---

[266] Swe Win, "Myanmar's Kaman Muslims Look to Elections to Restore Their Rights," Mizzima, http://mizzima.com/news-election-2015-election-features/myanmar%25E2%2580%2599s-kaman-muslims-look-elections-restore-their-rights.

[267] Nyi Nyi Kyaw, "Myanmar's Other Muslims: The Case of the Kaman," in *Citizenship in Myanmar: Ways of Being in and from Burma*, ed. Ashley South and Marie Lall (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2018).

3.5 THE BUDDHIST CLERGY AND WIRATHU

The construction of a hostile other is a common sight preceding most conflict. In the case of Myanmar, chauvinist Buddhists are the driving force behind the demonization of the local Muslims. In this context, religious actors not only mobilised the population but also appealed to the state to ramp up protective measures. Explaining the outbreak of violence that is conducted in the name of Buddhism, the rather sudden emergence of feelings of being threatened and the state's inability to address inflammatory acts first require a closer look at relations between Buddhism and the state and the social context in which monks move and operate.

3.5.1 BUDDHISM AND THE STATE

Early teachings of Buddha attribute not only a superiority of monks over worldly rulers, but also define the characteristic of an ideal Buddhist ruler, who has to rule by coercive power and not by force. Traditionally monks are required to detach themselves from worldly concerns and obliged refrain from interfering with the political realm. Yet inevitably, both authorities (Buddhism and monastic rule) bonded in the course of history.[268] Buddhism and politics linked through Buddhism universalistic thought, assuming that every individual is subject to Buddhist teachings. Consequently, kings were subject to Buddhist thought like anyone else. However, their position as a ruler required them to provide a safe land for Buddhism to thrive. In this duty, the state usually served as a protector of Buddhism, warded off threats, and provided the environment for religious worshipping to flourish. In turn, Buddhism provided the ruler with legitimacy and popular support. In this state-protected Buddhism, the cooperation of monastic order and secular authorities often yielded intermediate institutions that linked state and religious community, but also regulated the Buddhist leadership and ensured its purity. Thus, monks would remind rulers of their duties but refrain from publicly discussing state affairs or trying to gain authority over the political realm.[269]

The recent emergence of a Buddhist originates from this symbiotic relationship. Some Burmese monks accuse the state of having failed in its role to provide protection.[270] A threat to

[268] Ian Harris, "Introduction to Buddhism and the Political Process: Patterns of Interactions," in *Buddhism and the Political Process*, ed. Hiroko Kawanami (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016)., 2-3.
[269] Ibid., 2-7.
[270] "Buddhism and State Power in Myanmar," in *Asia Report No. 290*, ed. International Crisis Group (ICG) (Brussels: International Crisis Group (ICG), 2017)., 3.

the religious community, monks or Buddha's teachings is indeed a concrete condition where monks are permitted to get involved in lay matters. The possible actions however are subject to debate and range from condemning certain individuals through refusal of their alms and voicing criticism on politicians to participation in demonstrations and lobbying the country's legislative.[271]

3.5.2 PREVIOUS RELIGIOUS INVOLVEMENT IN POLITICS

The failure of the state as a patron began with the colonisation by the British Empire. The fall of the Mandalay monarchy and the British takeover ended more than 1000 years of Buddhist patronage. The British withdrew state support for monks and monasteries, which was perceived as a sign that Buddhist teachings are in recline. Anxiety over the loss of religious and cultural education and identity caused monks to interact with the political realm. Consequently, various anti-colonial movements formed under the banner of nationalism, which included the goal to restore Buddhist values. The first democratic government under U Nu initiated a process of "Bamarization" and "Buddhization", which was continued by the following military regimes. This process involved declaring Buddhism a state religion and re- establishing state support. It however favoured the Buddhist majority and Bamar-ethnicity, while discriminating ethnic minorities with different languages and religions that reside in Myanmar's border-regions. It also aimed to instrumentalize and co-opt Buddhism into state service. Threatened in their independence, monks voiced protest against the country's leadership and extensive interference throughout the 60s and 70s.[272]

Along Students, Monks took a central role in anti-governmental protest in 1974, 1988 and 2007. In all cases, they opposed repression, the absence of civil liberties, violence, government, co-optation of everyday life as well as economic mismanagement and called for democratic reform.[273] In these times of turmoil, monks not only acted as a mouthpiece of protest, but also covered state functions such as securing traffic, enforcing law and order, ensuring water supply and providing disaster relief.[274] Yet during previous protest, the monks appeared as a peaceful actor with no intention to incite hatred or violence against a certain group. Due to the democratic transition in 2010/11 Buddhist nationalism again became more salient and was

---

[271] Matthew J Walton, "Monks in Politics, Monks in the World: Buddhist Activism in Contemporary Myanmar," *Social Research* 82, no. 2 (2015).

[272] "The Resistance of the Monks," (Human Rights Watch, 2009)., 33-39.

[273] Ibid., 38-63.

[274] Ibid., 18,45.

mixed with xenophobic propaganda. The modern narrative identifies Islam and Muslims as a threat to the Buddhist community. Local incidents such as conflicts over land or incidents of rape, historical aversions against successful Muslim immigrants as well as awareness of global Muslim terror and armed conflict between Buddhist monks and Muslims in Thailand are implemented into an anti-Muslim narrative. This narrative that is dominated by the perception that Myanmar is threatened to be "Islamised" and serves as a justification of "defensive violence" and the call for state protection.[275] Thus, religious actors increasingly became involved in state affairs. Eventually, the ascribed role of the state as a protector of Buddhism also impeded the possibilities for the current government to criticise the actions of Buddhist organisations that argue to protect the religious community, as it would bring about accusations of neglecting the threat to the religious community.

3.5.3 STATUS OF THE CLERGY IN CONTEMPORARY MYANMAR

Myanmar has repeatedly been the country with the most generous population, despite the persistent poverty. In 2016 over 90% of the Burmese population reported to have donated money to charity.[276] The generous behaviour of the majority of Burmese stems from the Buddhist belief of rebirth and the tradition of Theravada Buddhism, which considers giving as a way to accumulate merit (punna) and thus having a favourable influence on a person's rebirth. Logically a great share of monetary donations in Myanmar benefit Buddhist institutions, which in turn allows them to provide social services such as schools, orphanages and hospitals.[277]

The religious community could not exist without the donations by the people because monks do not earn a living. Next to money, they also are supported in basic needs, such as food, habitat and clothing. Monks, maintain a close relationship with the local laypeople and enjoy a high reputation. Through their alms rounds of local households, they get a first-hand impression of the concerns of the people around them. It is common among Burmese to consult monks for counselling, moral guidance and advice in personal affairs.[278] As a rite of passage, young Burmese men traditionally "take robes" for a limited period of time. It is also common for people, or even complete administrative departments, to temporarily retreat to a monastery to

---

[275] "Buddhism and State Power in Myanmar.", 6-9.

[276] "Caf World Giving Index 2017," (London: Charities Aid Foundation, 2016)., 21.

[277] Paul Fuller, "The Act of Giving: What Makes Myanmar So Charitable?," The Myanmar times, https://www.mmtimes.com/lifestyle/16317-the-act-of-giving-what-makes-myanmar-so-charitable.html.

[278] Matthew J Walton, *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought in Myanmar* (Cambridge University Press, 2016)., 59-61.

cleanse the mind through religious studies and meditation. Monasteries are furthermore a centre of social activities and religious sermons, provide free education for those who cannot afford it, and allow access to radio or TV.[279] Thus, it is very likely that the vast majority of Myanmar's 90%-Buddhist majority has frequent interaction with members of the clergy and/or has received religious education. Therefore, monks have a superb access to the surrounding population, which is only exacerbated through internet and video sharing platforms.

Dedicated quantitative surveys on Islamophobia in Myanmar do not exist. Research on the anti-Muslim narrative is almost exclusively conducted in Rakhine and regions that were affected by sectarian violence. It is therefore hard to assess whether Muslims are perceived as a threat only in regions with geographic proximity to Muslim settlements, or if it is a countrywide phenomenon. Thus, it remains difficult to evaluate the reach and impact of xenophobic monks. The IRI public opinion poll shows that countrywide ethnic conflict, sectarian conflict and terrorism are considered the most serious problems. Fifty-two percent of the Burmese report that sectarian conflict is a serious problem within the country.[280] The poll however does not allow to clearly dissect the role of Islam and to what extend Muslims are perceived as a driving force in sectarian conflict and terrorism.

3.5.4 JUSTIFYING ACTOR SELECTION

To analyse the religious actors in Rakhine and Myanmar, a twofold approach is reasonable. The first subject of analysis is the prominent monk Ashin Wirathu, labelled as "the Buddhist face of terror" by Time Magazine. He is, without doubt, the most important source of islamophobic rhetoric and the monk with the greatest reach. His perceptions are shared and reproduced by other religious leaders, but this analysis will concentrate on Wirathu. Secondly, the religious organisations Ma Ba Tha and the informal 969-movement will be subject to scrutiny. Naturally, both actors are deeply intertwined. Wirathu was a central figure in the 969 movement. Nevertheless, 969 never got beyond the stage of loosely joint mobilised individuals. This task was carried out by Ma Ba Tha, who, as an organisation for the protection of Buddhism, had considerable influence through social projects, provision of education materials and an extensive network. The organisation was jointly responsible for the drafting and implementation of discriminatory laws and is currently in the process of establishing its own

---

[279] Sylwia Gil, "The Role of Monkhood in Contemporary Myanmar Society," (Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2008)., 5-8.

[280] "Survey of Burma/Myanmar - Public Opinion."

party. 969 and Ma Ba Tha not only spread religious propaganda via billboards, leaflets or DVDs, they also build a substantial network, actively mobilised the public and were able to successfully lobby the Burmese central government. Hence, special attention will be paid to lobbying efforts by religious groups and their connection to the political sphere. The anti-Muslim narrative was influence by all of these religious actors. To assess the degree, or potential growth, of hostilities towards Muslims, a potential evolution and content of the narrative will additionally be examined. Thirdly, I will briefly discuss the underlying reasons for the religious actors to engage in worldly affairs and stir hatred. From their statements, a perceived threat to Buddhism is obvious. However, if the real threat lies in a different ethnic group or if other worldly developments are a driver remains to be discussed.

3.6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

The previously introduced actors are the point of departure for the following analysis. Each of them is to various degrees involved in creating and spreading anti-Muslim sentiments, taking physical actions against them or in directly implementing laws that disenfranchise Rohingya. Based on Mann's insights on ethnic crimes during democratisation, it cannot be assumed that these actors take action in total isolation from each other. On the contrary, all influence each other and interact. Consequently, the Anti-Muslim narrative and subsequent discrimination cannot be the product of one actor alone. Thus, in addition to the actor's relevant statements on Rohingya, their concrete measures as well as exertion of influence on others will be scrutinized. For the subsequent analysis, I will divide the actors in two levels. One is the central government and the other one is the level of local politics in Rakhine state.

CHAPTER IV: ANALYSIS OF THE ELECTED CENTRAL GOVERNMENTS

Due to the NLD's boycott, the USDP triumphed in the 2010 election. Consisting of high-ranking military personnel, the party was a mere vehicle for Myanmar's former military leadership. The first democratically elected president of Myanmar, Thein Sein, previously served as a high-ranking Lieutenant General and later as the prime minister of the military junta. Neither military nor USDP showed significant interest in addressing Rohingya discrimination. As the Burmese administration was passed on to the NLD in 2016, the USDP found itself in the position of an opposition party, but the Tatmadaw remained considerably influential. Since the NLD took over government affairs, Myanmar is witnessing a hybrid government in which military and civilian centres of power coexist. Suu Kyi's post as State Counsellor and her acquisition of four ministerial positions (foreign affairs, president's office, energy and education) has concentrated great political power in her hands. Nevertheless, she has avoided confronting the military, despite its involvement in human rights violation. This included a continuous silence on Rohingya issues on her behalf.[281] The following section will scrutinise the three actors in regards to their attitude towards Rohingya, ethnic inclusion and potential securitisation of the topic in order to assess if these actors are responsible for creating or perpetuating the anti-Muslim narrative.

4.1. THE THEIN SEIN/USDP GOVERNMENT

Thein Sein, previous prime minister of the military junta, was sworn in in March 2011. During his presidency, he led the country on a course of economic reform, increased freedom of speech and pardon for political prisoners. However, his decision-making was never independent from his military ties and subject to lobbying by religious-nationalist groups. The following assessment of Thein Sein's presidency will concentrate on Sein's remarks on Rohingya and ethnic conflict, the interaction with religious actors, as well as corresponding actions undertaken by his government body.

---

[281] Marco Bünte, "Perilous Presidentialism or Precarious Power-Sharing? Hybrid Regime Dynamics in Myanmar," *Contemporary Politics* 24, no. 3 (2018).

4.1.1 THEIN SEIN'S INAUGURATION – A PROMISING START?

The newly elected president delivered a surprisingly liberal and open inauguration speech in March 2011. Starting with an allegiance to the constitution, not the Tatmadaw, he discussed matters of internal security, market-reforms, development programs as well as social and legal justice and equality. He envisioned a new surprising political course that seems liberated from military control and directed at reform and more civilian influence.[282]

Thein Sein remarked that "dogmatism, sectarian strife and racism instead of rebuilding the nation"[283] caused armed conflicts among national races in post-independence Myanmar. Accordingly, national unity was a key subject of his speech. In order to achieve national unity "it is required to build roads, railroads and bridges to overcome the natural barriers between regions of national races and to improve the education and health standards; to lay economic foundations to improve the socio-economic status of national races."[284] All the words wake expectations of a comprehensive national reconciliation process. However, Thein Sein did not imply that the government would unconditionally foster dialogue and development in peripheral areas. He also clearly remarked that "union spirit"[285] and national reconciliation are stalled by,

> So many individuals and unlawful organizations inside and outside that do not accept the State's seven-step Road Map and the constitution. They are all citizens of our country. Therefore they have to accept our government as their government constituted with national races on their own.[286]

Consequently, development and investment would only be provided to regions that are free of EAOs or controlled by signatories of the ceasefire agreement. This implies that the legitimacy, granted by the democratic election, provides the ground for rather radical measures against behaviour that is interpreted as threat to the unity. Moreover, Thein Sein's use of the term "national races" shows his intent to adhere to the concept of ethnic nationalism. His perception which groups are considered national races presumably did not differ from the position of previous military government, implying an exclusion of Rohingya, who are not mentioned in

---

[282] "President Thein Sein's Inaugural Speech," in *EBO Analysis Paper*, ed. Euro Burma Office (Chiang Mai: Euro Burma Office, 2011).

[283] "We Have to Strive Our Utmost to Stand as a Strong Government While Conducting Changes and Amendments in Order to Catch up with the Changing World - President U Thein Sein Delivers Inaugural Address to Pyidaungsu Hluttaw," *The New Light Of Myanmar*, 2011.03.31 2011., 1.

[284] Ibid., 3.

[285] Ibid., 3.

[286]Ibid., 3.

the speech. This concept of national races – and not citizens – that constitute the political community of Myanmar remained unchanged since latest constitution from 2008.[287]

The President furthermore guaranteed, "All citizens will enjoy equal rights in terms of law"[288] and promised to adopt new laws to ensure the protection of human rights and investigate previous violations.[289] In an address to the UN General Assembly, Thein Sein used the term "communal violence"[290] describing the situation in Rakhine. To the UN he promised that "people inhabiting in [sic!] our country, regardless of race religion and gender, have the right to live in peace and security."[291] Indeed, the Myanmar's National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC) was set up in the following. Nevertheless, it is attested with failure to meet international requirements, insufficient autonomy and "lack of impact"[292], causing it to be labelled as an "alibi institution". Undeniably, the impact of the institution was limited. Human rights violations in ethnic minority areas, limits to freedom of speech and discrimination of Rohingya remained unaddressed until the USDP abdicated in 2015.[293]

4.1.2 POST 2012 ELECTION – GIVING IN TO POPULAR DEMANDS

In the State of the Union Speech in March 2012, one month prior to the by-elections, Thein Sein did not make any reference to issues concerning Rohingya. When referring to the national races he remarked that "[l]ike all other national races such as Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Mon, Rakhine and Shan, Bamar is also one of the nationalities of the Union. The aspiration of the national races to share the rights among all and enjoy equality is also the desire of our government."[294] Building on this assumption, he emphasised the urgency to push forward the ceasefire agreements and initiate political dialogue between the central government and the

---

[287] Cheesman, "How in Myanmar "National Races" Came to Surpass Citizenship and Exclude Rohingya.", 10-11.
[288] "We Have to Strive Our Utmost to Stand as a Strong Government While Conducting Changes and Amendments in Order to Catch up with the Changing World - President U Thein Sein Delivers Inaugural Address to Pyidaungsu Hluttaw.", 5.
[289] Ibid., 5.
[290] PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR TO THE UNITED NATIONS, "Statement by His Excellency U Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and Chairman of the Myanmar Delegation " news release, 2012, https://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/67/MM_en.pdf., 3.
[291] Ibid., 3.
[292] Aung Khiang Min and Joses Kuan, "Human Rights Commission Comes under Fire over Record," Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/opinion/18786-human-rights-commission-comes-under-fire-over-record.html.
[293] "Burma 2015 Human Rights Report," in *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015*, ed. Human Rights and Labor Bureau of Democracy (United States Department of State, 2015).
[294] Thein Sein, "President Thein Sein's State of Union Speech (2012)," Hla Oo, http://hlaoo1980.blogspot.com/2012/03/president-thein-seins-state-of-union.html.

periphery, subtlety pointing out that his loyalties lie with the Bamar ethnic group.[295] Stressing the allegiance with the Bamar majority shortly before the by-elections surely was not haphazard. As the rival NLD competing in the election, the USDP hoped to win voters by appearing as a representative of Myanmar's largest ethnic group. Obviously, Rohingya were left out from the list of national races, despite theoretically being the fifth to seventh largest ethnic group in Burma. The president instead repeated claims that Rohingya as an ethnic group do not exist in Myanmar. Instead he denotes them as "Bengalis who were brought for farming" during colonial times.[296] But generally, the President did not extensively refer to Bengalis or illegal immigrants in order to gain or mobilise voters. Since the first incidents of communal violence, occurring later that year, would kick-start anti-Rohingya campaigns, it can be inferred either that actors deliberately politicised the issue, or that latent islamophobic sentiments were unearthed by a triggering event. Schissler's, Walton's and Thi's research, however, suggests that the deliberate construction of a fearsome other is indeed driven by political and religious actors who took advantage of the contentions in Rakhine State.[297]

In reaction to violent clashes in Rakhine in 2012, Thein Sein reinforced his opinion on the Muslim demographic group. A government website published Thein Sein's opinion that "we will take care of our own ethnic nationalities, but Rohingya who came to Burma illegally are not of our ethnic nationalities and we cannot accept them here."[298] Thein Sein proposed that Rohingya, which he calls "Bengalis", who came during the British colonial rule and their descendants are welcome to stay in the country. Those who immigrated after 1948 consequently would have to leave.[299] In Sein's opinion, a deportation of illegal immigrants would be the best solution for all involved parties. He proposed to the UN refugee agency, "the solution to this problem is that they can be settled in refugee camps managed by UNHCR, and UNHCR provides for them. If there are countries that would accept them, they could be sent there."[300]

The government-appointed commission to investigate violence in Rakhine clarified that the term "Rohingya" is not officially recognised. In its report, the commission argues that the

---

[295] Ibid.

[296] Anne Gearan, "Burma's Thein Sein Says Military 'Will Always Have a Special Place' in Government," The Washington Post, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/burmas-thein-sein-says-military-will-always-have-a-special-place-in-government/2013/05/19/253c300e-c0d4-11e2-8bd8-2788030e6b44_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.3651a3415e2a.

[297] Schissler, Walton, and Thi, "Reconciling Contradictions: Buddhist-Muslim Violence, Narrative Making and Memory in Myanmar."

[298] Rachel Vanderbrink and Ko Win Niang, "Call to Put Rohingya in Refugee Camps," Radio Free Asia, https://www.rfa.org/english/news/rohingya-07122012185242.html.

[299] Ibid.

[300] Ibid.

term has been deliberately used and politicised by Rohingya elites in order to achieve recognition as one of the national races. It allegedly gained prominence after 2010, but prior to that self-identification as Rohingya has been marginal.[301] The report furthermore identifies historically grown aversions, ethnic nationalism among Rakhine ethnics and a fear of a "Bengali plot" to take over Rakhine as a driver for the sectarian violence.[302] It however notes that "no hard evidence to show that Bengalis are attempting to control Rakhine State"[303] exist. Yet the acceptance of Rohingya as an ethnic race is considered as a potential risk of conflict, due to rejection among the population. Thus, the commission considers a fair and systematic application of the existing citizenship laws as well as an evaluation if Rohingya qualify as ethnic race as an adequate solution. However, both leave little chances for Rohingya, since they neither possess documents to prove their ancestry, nor is their language accepted as native to Burma. This indicates that the commission perceives the Rohingya issue as a matter of illegal immigration. It however urges to protect human rights regardless of citizenship or migration status.[304] The report by no means criticises the Tatmadaw for misconduct or human rights violations, even during prior violent incidents like the Naga Min campaign. On the contrary, regarding the 2012 violence the report praises the military for stabilising the situation or preventing violence in areas with increased presence of armed forces.[305] In sum, the creators of the report refuse to use the term "Rohingya", and is heavily oriented towards increasing boosting security against the perceived threat instead of addressing the underlying citizenship crisis through civilian means.

Despite positive trends in Myanmar's first democratic years, the UN urged serious concerns in December 2012 regarding human rights violations and urged the government to protect human rights regardless of ethnicity or nationality.[306] Demands that have been repeated by the UN Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar in February 2013[307] and the UN General Assembly in March.[308] The Burmese government did not react directly to the allegations, despite the growing urgency. However, in a parliamentary session of the lower

---

[301] "Final Report of Inquiry Commission on Sectarian Violence in Rakhine State.", 53-56.

[302] Ibid., 14-19.

[303] Ibid., 16.

[304] Ibid., 64-65.

[305] Ibid., 14,48.

[306] "Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly on 24 December 2012," ed. United Nations General Assembly (New York: United Nations General Assembly, 2013)., 3.

[307] Tomás Ojea Quintana, "Statement of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar," news release, 2013, http://www.globalr2p.org/media/files/rapporteur-press-statement-feb-2013.pdf.

[308] "Human Rights Situation That Require the Council's Attention," (Geneva: United Nations Human Rights Council, 2013).

house in February 2013, Deputy Minister for Immigration and Population Kyaw Kyaw Tun underlined the official narrative. When asked about the Rohingya he said, "There has never been a Rohingya race in Rakhine state. According to the censuses conducted in 1973 and in 1983, the country's ethnic groups include no Rohingya." [309] The Burmese Ministry of Immigration and Population infamously represents Myanmar's attitude towards Rohingya. Its previous website states the ministry's motto as, "The Earth will not swallow a race to extinction but another will".[310] Apparently, this slogan still covers the ministry's walls until today.[311] As no other ethnic group in Myanmar is suspected to plot an extermination of Bamar Buddhists, this statement can only be directed at the alleged Muslim immigrants from Bangladesh. As the anti-Muslim rhetoric gained traction, the USDP government, alongside the notorious failure to address human rights violations and inadequate violence by security forces, transformed its ideology into political action and introduced laws and regulations that increased Rohingya discrimination.

The draft of the "Rakhine State Action Plan", designed as a response to the 2012 violence in Rakhine State, similarly displays the government's stance towards the Rohingya. Drafted by the government appointed commission, the plan consistently used the term "Bengali" when referring to Rohingya. It was intended to be a guideline for post-conflict reconstruction of Rakhine state. Discriminatory practice becomes obvious in the sections of the plan proposing a relocation of internally displaced Rohingya and the expenditure of the national verification process. The plan included a resettlement of existing internally displaced persons to unnamed sites with a certain distance to the state's capital. It however omitted the possibility of a return to the original homes and paved the way for confiscation of land, previously cultivated by Rohingya. The planned citizenship verification process relied on the 1982 Citizenship Law, which left Rohingya only two options: identify as "Bengali" or face statelessness and possible detention and deportation. It furthermore required them to present valid documents on family history. Documents, which many victims of displacement do not possess or had lost during their escape. The plan furthermore includes that individuals who refuse to identify as Bengali or cannot provide the required documents will be subject to "arbitrary, indefinite detention with

[309] Ganjanakhundee Supalak, "Myanmar Elite Must Alter Their Thinking on the Rohingya," *The Nation*, 02/27/ 2013 Feb 27 2013.

[310] Myanmar Online Data Information Network Solutions, "Ministry of Immigration and Population " Myanmar Online Data Information Network Solutions, http://www.modins.net/myanmarinfo/ministry/population.htm.

[311] Thomas Manch, "For Muslims across Myanmar, Citizenship Rights a Legal Fiction," Frontier Myanmar, https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/for-muslims-across-myanmar-citizenship-rights-a-legal-fiction.

the possibility of deportation."[312] Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director of Human Rights Watch, considered the plan "a blueprint for permanent segregation and statelessness that appears designed to strip the Rohingya of any remnants of hope"[313] and eventually push them to flee the country.

The denotation of Rohingya as "Bengali" has two implications. Firstly, even if they are welcome to stay in the country it is not guaranteed that they will receive full citizen's status and rights. Accepting the status as "Bengali" entails the possibility of being rejected from the "national races" without any prospects of reversal. Secondly, once Rohingya are eligible to register and obtain ID cards as Bengalis, it is not guaranteed that this status will not be revoked in the future. Accepting the term "Bengali" might be turned against them when future policies change and demand a deportation of Bengalis. Thein Sein's proposal included an additional problem: due to the discriminatory practice of issuing ID cards only for those who renounced to identify as Rohingya, a significant part of the Rohingya has only a temporary ID or none at all. It would consequently be difficult, probably arbitrary, to determine whose lineage can be traced back to British colonial rule and who is a supposedly illegal Bengali immigrant.[314]

Despite initial commitments to equal rights, harmony between the national races and a proposed acceptance of those Rohingya who were residents of Burma before its independence, Sein's political course towards the Rohingya became increasingly influenced by populist demands. The driving force behind the societal pressure were local Rakhine parties and nationalist Buddhist monks. Approaching the 2015 election, the USDP found itself in a more competitive situation. Fearing to lose ground vis-à-vis the NLD in the 2012 by-election and 2015 election, the USDP gave in to demands of the RNDP and ANP. The RNDP had previously formed in Rakhine to contest in the 2010 general election and established itself as the strongest party in Rakhine and a considerable force in the national parliament. It later formed a new coalition under the name ANP. The political climate at that time was in favour of the NLD, so the USDP leadership approached the RNDP and ANP as a potential coalition partner. With growing significance and confidence the RNDP quickly deployed anti-Muslim rhetoric and

---

312 Human Rights Watch, "Burma: Government Plan Would Segregate Rohingya - Forced Resettlement, Discriminatory Citizenship Creates Dangers," Human Rights Watch, https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/10/03/burma-government-plan-would-segregate-rohingya.
313 Gabriel Domínguez, "Hrw Slams Myanmar's Rohingya Plan as a 'Blueprint for Segregation'," Deutsche Welle, https://www.dw.com/en/hrw-slams-myanmars-rohingya-plan-as-a-blueprint-for-segregation/a-17972391.
314 Ibid.

- 85 -

DOI:10.6814/NCCU201900129

demanded greater autonomy and control over natural resources for the Rakhine administration; demands that were partially supported by USDP-government.[315]

Apart from political competition, the incumbent government also faced substantial pressure by nationalist and chauvinistic Buddhist individuals and collectives. Exploiting the nationwide distress about the 2012 violence in Rakhine, the 969 movement gained traction in late 2012. Their anti-Muslim narrative and urge to protect Buddhists in Myanmar quickly attracted countless followers. Their propaganda did not exclusively target Rohingya. The 969 movement also identified Aung San Suu Kyi and her affiliates as a collaborator against the Buddhist majority. The movement's popularity and perspective on the one hand urged a reaction from the USDP and, on the other hand, caused political leaders of both parties to distance themselves from support for Rohingya while assuaging Buddhist concerns.[316] Though the USPD did not openly support the 969 movement, they either tolerated them in order to secure support of Buddhists or underestimated the ruthlessness of their ideology. Sann Sint, minister of religious affairs, initially ruled out the possibility that Wirathu is provoking religious violence.[317] Regarding official support for the monks, government officials usually maintain a low profile or admit formal ties at best.[318]Yet some sources even assume a financial support to radical monks by the USDP.[319] Eventually, the party offered and open ear for Buddhist concerns, but reacted sensitive to its rapid growing influence. The governmental Sangha Council, responsible for regulating Buddhist affairs, banned the 969 movement in late 2013. Yet, the ban was not a disapproval of the movement's ideology or responsibility to inflaming hatred and violence. It was issued because the 969 movement, patronising protection and promotion of Buddhism, interfered with the responsibilities of the state and the official religious authority.[320] Hence, the government tacitly approved the growing antipathy towards Muslims and to a great degree approved the goals of the religious movements. It only imposed limitation on the religious movement when it interfered with state responsibilities.

The practice of systematically excluding Rohingya from society and politics manifested itself in the 2014 census. Although financially and administratively supported by the UN, the

---

[315] van Klinken and Aung, "The Contentious Politics of Anti-Muslim Scapegoating in Myanmar.", 7-10.
[316] Ibid., 11-14
[317] Andrew R.C. Marshall, "Special Report: Myanmar Gives Official Blessing to Anti-Muslim Monks," Reuters, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-969-specialreport/special-report-myanmar-gives-official-blessing-to-anti-muslim-monks-idUSBRE95Q04720130627.
[318] Aung Thaung, interview by Sanay Lin, 2013.
[319] Emanuel Stoakes, "Monks, Powerpoints, and Ethnic Cleansing," Foreign Policy, https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/10/26/evidence-links-myanmar-government-monks-ethnic-cleansing-rohingya/.
[320] "Buddhism and State Power in Myanmar.", 10-11.

census did not offer the option of identifying as Rohingya. Instead, registering as "Bengali" was provided as the only option.[321] A directive by the government instructed census staff to refuse to fill in the forms if someone intended to identify as Rohingya.[322] In the census, a majority of Rohingya decided to choose statelessness over identifying as Bengali. An additional campaign to officially verify the (non-)citizenship status of Rohingya in refugee camps solidified their status as outsiders and illegals, as the required credentials are almost unable to obtain for the already disenfranchised IDPs.[323]Alistair Burt, Minister of the Department for International Development and Foreign & Commonwealth Office, evaluated that self-identification as Rohingya was denied "for reasons of anticipated conflict and violence […]. There was clear evidence from the Rakhine community in the region that there would have been violence because they do not see them as Rohingya."[324] This implies that the government favoured security and favour of the local Buddhists over the granting of equal rights. More cynically put, one can infer that preservation of peace was a convenient excuse to carry on with previous discrimination. I any case, this is an accommodation of Rakhine nationalists, who got their will because the expected alternative was violence. It furthermore demonstrates that the potential to mobilise alone was big enough to urge a reaction by the government.

Just a few months prior to the 2015 elections, Thein Sein issued a presidential order, declaring the near-term expiration of the white cards, which served as a substitute ID for individuals with unclear citizen's status. Mostly held by Rohingya these cards previously granted voting rights in the 2010 election and the right to form a political party.[325] Directly preceding this decision were protests by angry Buddhists in Rakhine and Yangon and the decision of the RNDP to challenge the suffrage for Rohingya in front of a national court.[326] This decision marks a clear shift of alliances among the USDP. During the 2010 election, Thein Sein's party was unable to compete with the RNDP for ethnic Rakhine voters. In order to secure

---

[321] The Guardian, "Burma Census Is Not Counting Rohingya Muslims, Says Un Agency " The Guardian, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/02/burma-census-rohingya-muslims-un-agency.

[322] Andrew Buncombe, "With 'Rohingya' Not an Option on Census Forms, Burma's New Democracy Is Facing an Identity Crisis," The Independent https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/with-rohingya-not-an-option-on-census-forms-burma-s-new-democracy-is-facing-an-identity-crisis-9232505.html.

[323] Ahmad Suaedy and Muhammad Hafiz, "Citizenship Challenges in Myanmar's Democratic Transition: Case Study of the Rohingya," *Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* 22, no. 1 (2015)., 51-52.

[324] "Bangladesh and Burma: The Rohingya Crisis," (House of Commons, International Development Committee, 2018)., 19.

[325] Sithu Aung Myint, "White Cards: The Junta's Toxic Legacy," Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/opinion/10076-white-cards-the-junta-s-toxic-legacy.html.

[326] Oren Samet, "The Explosive Politics of Voting Rights in Myanmar," The Diplomat, https://thediplomat.com/2015/03/the-explosive-politics-of-voting-rights-in-myanmar/.

a majority in Rakhine state, the USDP approached white card holders, who had a significant influence on the final election outcome.[327]

Finally, the government's biggest satisfaction of nationalist demands occurred shortly before the 2015 election. After considerable lobbying effort, the so-called "protection of race and religion laws" were submitted to the parliament in December 2014 and implemented in 2015. These laws, aimed at controlling birth rate and marriages of the Muslim population, and were directly designed by the Ma Ba Tha, which itself formed out of the populist 969 movement.[328] This shows that the USDP's behaviour is not purely controlled by a fixed ideology, but also subject to pragmatic calculation. Hence public pressure and strive to stay in power forced a shift in the political course and the need to deal with publicly take position towards the Rohingya. In need to compete with the successful NLD in 2015, the USDP made use of the popular anti-Muslim sentiments and henceforth sided with Rakhine ethnics, clerics and parties. This demonstrates a degree of opportunism among the USDP when winning voters is at stake. The fact that the party sided with forces that openly propagated vilification and exclusion of certain ethnics shows the USPD's predatory character. The USDP's position, indicated via a few prominent quotes, as well as the implications are summed up in the following table (Table 1).

Quote	Interpretation	Implications
Frequent use of "national races" "There has never been a Rohingya race in Rakhine state"	Adherence to ethnic nationalism	Rohingya need to prove membership in ethnic races, which is a priori ruled out
"Rohingyas who came to Burma illegally"	Consider issue as a problem of illegal immigration	Enforcement of citizenship law and deportation suggested
"The Earth will not swallow a race to extinction, but another will"	Supporting Buddhist paranoia, despite own commission finding no evidence for conspiracy	Free reign for Buddhist firebrands
"Bamar is also one of the nationalities of the Union"	Allegiance with Buddhist majority	Implementation of Buddhist demands such as removal of white cards and "race and religion laws"

TABLE 1 – USDP

---

[327] Myint, "White Cards: The Junta's Toxic Legacy".
[328] Iselin Frydenlund, "Religious Liberty for Whom? The Buddhist Politics of Religious Freedom During Myanmar's Transition to Democracy," *Nordic Journal of Human Rights* 35, no. 1 (2017).

4.2 THE TATMADAW

The Burmese military is, as previously elaborated, a constant force in Burmese politics. This allowed the members to penetrate multiple economic sectors. Consequently influence over the political reform and oversight over the privatisation of markets is in the generals' best interest. Ever since the first coup d'état, the military has seen itself as the guardian of the state, political institutions and stability in the country. This perception has not changed until today. Therefore, the Tatmadaw possesses control over key internal ministry and enjoys a reservation of 25% of the seats in the national parliament. Until the peace process is completed, a change of these conditions is unlikely. During the USDP as well as the NLD rule, the Tatmadaw utilized its liberties and continued its own strategy regarding ethnic minorities and Rohingya. The following section will show the contemporary stance of Myanmar's military towards the Muslim minority.

4.2.1 STRATEGY CONCERNING ROHINGYA

Regarding the military's strategy concerning the Rohingya, speculations outweigh profound information. From a variety of theories, some unlikely,[329] the author rules out the possibility that military campaigns were a mere overreaction to raids by Rohingya insurgents or that the Tatmadaw is caught in a proxy war between the United States, Saudi Arabia and China. It is more likely that the military indeed intends to protect Myanmar's unity and eventually aims to expel Rohingya.

The Tatmadaw's official position, assumes that military operations in Rakhine serve to protect Myanmar's unity and stability by preventing or retaliating attacks from international Islamist groups. In this narrative, the military frames militant Rohingya groups as an extended arm of global Islamist terrorism. The applied strategy includes the "four cuts" counter insurgency strategy, aimed at cutting of insurgents of food, funds, intelligence and recruits. In the case of the Rohingya, this resulted in the destruction of villages, land and crops, which was one of the reasons for the massive emigration in 2015. This does not exclude an intentional exploitation of the insurgent attacks to carry out a long-term plan of ethnic cleansing and relocation of Rohingya to Bangladesh. The plan involves the deliberate worsening of living

---

[329] Andrew Selth, "The Rohingya Crisis and Myanmar's Military Responses," Lowy Institute, https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/rohingyas-and-politico-military-strategies.

conditions via the ongoing practice of depriving citizen's rights to Rohingya and more active methods as the aforementioned four cuts strategy. This strategy involves the expulsion of Rohingya in the northern areas, combined with a resettlement of their lands by Buddhists, in order to create Buddhist "buffer" between the Muslim communities.[330]

Based on the dynamics of the recent violence and previous discrimination, the author concludes that a long-term plan of Rohingya expulsion is indeed implemented. Protection of the country's stability and unity is consequently just a specious argument. From the Tatmadaw's perspective, focusing on maintaining law and order serves to argue for the preservation of the Tatmadaw's independence and high funding in the name of protecting the country. Conservation of the Tatmadaw's position as a praetorian protector of the state and its integrity, and the necessary freedom of action, presupposes the military's veto-position in politics and a lack of civilian control over the armed forces. Hence, the military can claim authority over security operations without civil interference. In this course, some threats might be over exaggerated to allow the Tatmadaw to present its power. Denouncing Rohingya to create a common enemy is therefore an effective instrument in this scheme.

Historically, institutionalised discrimination of Rohingya is evident, either in citizenship laws, limitations on marriage, religious freedom, freedom of movement and in violent attacks.[331] Reports furthermore claim that a long-term plan of ethnic cleansing as well as institutionalised discrimination, in the form of boycotts, surveillance forced birth control and cessation of providing birth certificates, existed since the late 80s.[332] This confirms the suggestion that the military is historically deeply involved in a campaign of ethnic cleansing. The Burmanisation of northern Rakhine through the creation of Buddhist model villages has indeed been going on for several years.[333] These efforts have, supported by local politicians, been maintained after recent emigration of Rohingya.[334] The intent is clearly to change the ethnic composition of the region and to complicate Rohingya repatriation.

---

[330] Ibid.

[331] Smith, *" All You Can Do Is Pray": Crimes against Humanity and Ethnic Cleansing of Rohingya Muslims in Burma's Arakan State.*, 77.

[332] MacManus, Green, and de la Cour Venning, *Countdown to Annihilation: Genocide in Myanmar.*, 36, 70-72.

[333] Smith et al., "They Gave Them Long Swords: Preparations for Genocide and Crimes against Humanity against Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine State, Myanmar.", 4.

[334] Win Ko Ko Latt and Min Thein Aung, "Myanmar's Rakhine Lawmakers Want More 'Ethnic Villages' in Muslim-Majority Areas," Radio Free Asia, https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/myanmars-rakhine-lawmakers-want-more-ethnic-villages-in-muslim-majority-areas-06052017163718.html.

The latest violence shows considerable preparations and strategy, involving segregation, stripping Rohingya of weapon like objects and bolstering local militias and military forces.[335] Reports accuse the military of failure to protect and even involvement in destruction of homes, arbitrary arrests and killings related to communal violence[336], as well as a disproportionate use of force, involving forced relocation and destruction of villages and food stocks, when reacting to the ARSA's 2016 attacks.[337] Hence, the "four cuts" disproportionally targeted civilians, confirming speculations that the operations are part of a deliberate campaign of ethnic cleansing. Indeed, the Natural Disaster Management Law allows the Burmese government to seize burnt land in order to manage the restoration of the soil. This law has been used previously to prevent the return of internally displaced people and is likely to have an impact on return of the refugees that left in 2017.[338] Although the operations are framed as counter-terrorist, the extent to which civilians and their livelihood are targeted suggests an intention of dispersing Rohingya from the region. Amnesty International found systematic destruction of Rohingya villages in 2017 and calls the operation a "targeted campaign to push the Rohingya people out of Myanmar".[339] This would allow for land grab by Tatmadaw business conglomerates or local Rakhine people. Reports that Rohingya, who stayed in Myanmar after the initial violence, were deprived of access to sources of food and humanitarian aid reinforce the suspicions that the military is carrying out a coordinated campaign of ethnic cleansing. Rohingya claim that the military not only seized their livestock and burned markets, but also denied Rohingya to access their farmlands as late as the end of 2017, when the fighting was over for months. More severely, the military burned down and razed the cleared Rohingya settlements for months after August 2017. Since 2018, state and private actors are constructing military structures and civilian infrastructure on previous Rohingya settlements and farmland. This is unlikely to secure a safe repatriation of Rohingya but serves the purpose of military control over the region and the settlement of non-Rohingya model-villages.[340]

Eventually, the Tatmadaw can boast about protecting the country and having solved the Rohingya issue. Eventually, no evidence for a deliberate planning and execution of one of these

---

[335] Smith et al., "They Gave Them Long Swords: Preparations for Genocide and Crimes against Humanity against Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine State, Myanmar."

[336] Smith, *" All You Can Do Is Pray": Crimes against Humanity and Ethnic Cleansing of Rohingya Muslims in Burma's Arakan State*.

[337] "Myanmar: A New Muslim Insurgency in Rakhine State.", 7.

[338] Hunecke, "Mission Report of Ohchr Rapid Response Mission to Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.", 4.

[339] Amnesty International, "Myanmar: Scorched-Earth Campaign Fuels Ethnic Cleansing of Rohingya from Rakhine State," Amnesty International, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/09/myanmar-scorched-earth-campaign-fuels-ethnic-cleansing-of-rohingya-from-rakhine-state/.

[340] "We Will Destroy Everything," (London: Amnesty International, 2018)., 101-133.

strategies is available. But it is likely that a mixture of claiming the maintenance of security and long-term goal of displacing Rohingya are interwoven and directly connected to anti-Muslim rhetoric.

The temporal occurrence of the execution of such a campaign is not arbitrary. After the democratisation, it was vital for the military to maintain a positive image. Hence, satisfying the growing islamophobia among the public through words and actions allowed the military to bolster its reputation. As the military is only a partner in political decision-making, it needed to refer to means that were in its traditional field of duties. Those were the definition and preservation of an (alleged) enemy to country and people and, of course, military operations. Hence, the conduction of ethnic cleansing, under the disguise of a security operation, was a piece from the military's toolset to signal its intention tackle illegal immigration and a Muslim threat in the name of the Burmese people.

4.2.2 ATTITUDE TOWARDS ROHINGYA

Already in the early 2000s, the military tried to connect Rohingya to transnational terrorism. Allegations of Rohingya connections to Osama Bin Laden and conducted weapons training were submitted to the U.S. embassy in Yangon in 2002. The claims of terrorist activity or insurgency in Rakhine in this period have turned out to be fabrications. The move, in contrast to recent rhetoric, was not aimed at mobilizing the public against Muslims, but at approaching the U.S as an ally in the war against terror. The military furthermore utilised the assumed existence of insurgency to underline its narrative of external threats to the country, to which sovereignty and military strength would be the adequate answer.[341] More recently, Tatmadaw rhetoric is directed at mobilising the public against Rohingya and in favour of military campaigns.

The military's attitude towards Rohingya as well as the self-perception of the military manifest themselves in the speeches and publications on social media by the Senior General Min Aung Hlaing. The speeches feature the conventional rhetoric of having emerged from colonialism, modernising the army, military values, the need for peace and development and the necessity to protect the country and its integrity, which is accompanied by comments on recent political developments and strategies for the future.

---

[341] Joseph Allchin, "The Rohingya, Myths and Misinformation," Democratic Voice of Burma, http://www.dvb.no/analysis/the-rohingya-myths-and-misinformation/22597.

In 2012, contrary to suspicions that the military would refuse to let go of their political influence, Min Aung Hlaing stressed compliance with the transition and referred to the obligation to defend the constitution. The "national constitution clearly states that the army has a fundamental duty to protect the constitution. So I would like to say that protecting the constitution is one of the main responsibilities of the army as we build our country into becoming a modern, prosperous and developed democracy."[342] Similar statements for the military's support of the democratic transition and protection of sovereignty and solidarity were made in 2013. Besides that, Min Aung Hlaing also reacted to previous communal violence, rejecting any involvement in war crimes or genocide by the Tatmadaw.[343]

In 2014 General Min Aung Hlaing payed special attention to the peace process and national stability. He warned that a consequence of failing to secure ethnic unity would be state collapse or even loss of sovereignty. Additionally he criticised writing and expressing opinions against national solidarity and selfish acts as impeding peace.[344] Hence, the military declares its ultimate goal is protecting peace and unity, confirming the praetorian narrative that previous military coups d'état were a necessary mean to safeguard union, law and order and peace from descending into extensive ethnic violence. Ethnic unity is a frequently mentioned precondition to peace and stability. The Senior General glorifies periods of unity within Myanmar's ethnic groups, which allegedly are the backbone of peace in the country. From the military's perspective, this unity is more likely characterised by a halt of ethnic insurgency and subjugation to Naypyidaw's policies than by a commitment to minority rights.

Even, the growing influence of Ma Ba Tha and the 969-movement as well as the upcoming elections and communal violence did not urge Main Aung Hlaing to take a stance on the Rohingya issue in 2015. The 2015 speech mainly focused on the army's increased pressure to create a climate for peaceful elections. Hence the portrayal of the army as the protector of political progress continued. The need to protect, however, shifted from state and unity to the new and promising democratic system. Hlaing implied a warning to ethnic armed groups to "refrain from forcing voters in areas under their control to support certain political parties"[345],

---

[342] "Myanmar (Burma): Burma Military Chief Defends Army's Political Role," *Asia News Monitor*, Mar 28, 2012 2012.

[343] Zin Linn, "Burma Army's Boss Calls for Stronger Armed Forces," Asian Correspondent https://asiancorrespondent.com/2013/03/burma-armys-boss-calls-for-stronger-and-modernized-armed-forces/#ACmfEaBVV4mtqSaK.97.

[344] "Myanmar (Burma): Senior General Min Aung Hlaing Says Dialogue without Ceasefire Would Lead to More Armed Conflict with Ethnic Groups," *Asia News Monitor*, Apr 02, 2014 2014.

[345] "Myanmar (Burma) - Military Chief Warns against Strong-Arming Voters in National Elections," *Asia News Monitor*, 03/31/ 2015 Mar 31 2015.

underlining the Tatmadaw's intent to secure law and order and free elections. The general also remarked that Myanmar's ethnic and cultural diversity is foundation for the multi-party democracy, but omitted statements on which groups is considered as native to Myanmar.[346] In an interview in the same year, the general clearly pointed out that Myanmar, in his opinion, is a country a group of ethnics, whose solidarity has to be preserved. When asked about a federal union sensitive to ethnic lines he stated, "Ethnics live in the country; not the ethnics built it. Ethnics live in this country together. They are Bamar, Kachin, Kayah, Kayin, Chin, Mon, Rakhine and Shan. We (the ethics) need the same spirit."[347] Not only does he omit Muslim or Rohingya, but he also assumes that unity among ethnic groups is a duty since none of them is responsible from building the nation. He did not clarify whomever he considers builder of the nation, thus his statement can only be interpreted as an assumption that Myanmar was not built by the multi-ethnic Federal Union after independence from colonial rule, but is rather rooted in history and primordial blood ties with land and people.

Again, in the 2016, speech the military leadership underlined its crucial role in politics. Shortly before the power was transferred to Aung San Suu Kyi's NLD, Min Aung Hlaing underlined the military's previous role in protecting the country and the need to maintain political influence in order to satisfy the duties as a protector of the nation. He said, „The Tatmadaw has to be present as the leading role in national politics with regards to the ways we stand along the history and the critical situation in the country."[348] Apart from that, he also stressed the Tatmadaw's intention to cooperate with the future government. He added, "The two main hindrances in democratization are lack of abiding by the rule of law, regulations and the presence of armed insurgencies."[349] Naturally, for all of these problems a strong and independent army would be the perfect remedy. The demand of the army in a leading role and politics and the intention to cooperate as part of a functioning democracy are contradictory. Nevertheless, they perfectly represent the self-conception of the army as well as the Burmese political system, which grants impunity and incontestable political representation to the military.

---

[346] "Myanmar (Burma): Snr-Gen Min Aung Hlaing's Armed Forces Day Speeches," *Asia News Monitor*, March 27, 2018 2018.

[347] Eleven Media Group, "Myanmar (Burma) - Exclusive Interview with the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Min Aung Hlaing," Asia News Monitor,
https://search.proquest.com/docview/1657330747?accountid=10067. .

[348] "Myanmar Military Chief Calls for "Leading Role" in National Politics," *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, March 28, 2016 2016.

[349] Min Aung Hlaing, "Senior General Maha Thray Sithu Min Aung Hlaing Addresses 71st Anniversary Armed Forces Day Parade," https://www.facebook.com/seniorgeneralminaunghlaing/posts/1188089224558897.

The 2017 address referred several times to historical disintegration of Burma's unity, which resulted in rebellions and weakness. The general primarily referred to the period of parliamentary democracy after independence, which saw failure to find political consensus and a resulting dominance by insurgents. To "take lessons from the fact that if there is no unity, only losses and decreases will be found"[350] Min Aung Hlaing renewed the duty "of the army to keep the national tranquillity, solidarity and development to support the multi-party democracy system selected by the people."[351] Hence, even after the NLD superseded the USDP, the military continues to consider itself as the primary guardian of unity, stability and democracy. In 2017, insurgent groups are framed as terrorists for the first time. Not only a change in attitude towards ethnic armed groups occurred in 2017, also the case of the Rohingya was commented for the first time. The Senior General remarked that

> It has al already been announced that there is no race termed Rohingya in Myanmar, the Bengalis in Rakhine State are not the Myanmar nationalities but the immigrants. It will be seen that the victims coming out of the terrorist attacks committed by some Bengalis which took place in October 2016 resulted in the political interferences [sic!].[352][353]

Despite parts of the statements being hard to decipher, probably due to the translators limited abilities, Min Aung Hlaing clearly points out that Rohingya are neither considered one of the national races nor considered as native Burmese. A statement, which he repeated to the US ambassador in to Myanmar.[354] Furthermore, the 2016 attacks on border posts are regarded as terrorism that effectively caused a state reaction. "Political inference", in this context, could be a very euphemistic description of the retaliation strikes after the first ARSA attacks. In any case, the terrorist are blamed for the outcome of the turmoil after their assaults. Concerning accusations of human rights violations by the Tatmadaw during the military campaign, the general makes no further comments.[355]

After the 2017 attacks of ARSA on Burmese security outposts, Min Aung Hlaing reinforced the military leadership's denial of the existence of a Rohingya ethnicity and the

---

[350] Min Aung Hlaing, "Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Maha Thray Sithu Min Aung Hlaing Delivers Speech at Parade of 72nd Anniversary Armed Forces Day for 2017,"
https://www.facebook.com/seniorgeneralminaunghlaing/posts/1525338914167258.
[351] Ibid.
[352] Ibid.
[353] Other sources translated it as follows: "It will be seen that the victims coming out of the terrorist attacks committed by some Bengalis in October 2016 were the result of political interference."
(https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/snr-gen-min-aung-hlaings-armed-forces-day-speeches.html)
[354] Richard Finney, "'Bengalis' Not Native to Myanmar, Country's Military Chief Says," Radio Free Asia, https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/bengalis-10122017191055.html/.
[355] Hlaing, "Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Maha Thray Sithu Min Aung Hlaing Delivers Speech at Parade of 72nd Anniversary Armed Forces Day for 2017".

narrative of coordinated terrorist attacks. A Facebook statement, published on September 2nd 2017, expands the narrative of expansionist Bengalis by referring to historical events in which, even prior to Burma's independence, "Bengali attacked, murdered and coerced them [Rakhine ethnics] into leaving their home"[356], after the population of Bengali grew during the colonial period. According to the General, the Tatmadaw will prevent a reoccurrence of these events and protect Rakhine ethnics from "ARSA extremist Bengali terrorists' attacks". The General identifies the root cause of the conflict in terrorist attacks that developed from a denial of the legal verification process and the 1982 Citizenship Law (by "Bengali") and religious manipulation. The statement furthermore involves denials of "oppression or intimidation against Bengalis in Rakhine region" and a declaration that "absolutely, our country [Myanmar] has no Rohingya race."[357]

A post on the Senior General's Facebook page from September 15th incites the fear of Muslim expansion by describing the 2017 attacks as "an organized attempt of extremist Bengalis in Rakhine State to build a stronghold in Buthidaung and Maungtaw. They have demanded recognition as Rohingya, which has never been an ethnic group in Myanmar."[358]

The general's official website and news outlet features multiple articles, mostly about speeches by the General or reports about meetings with foreign officials, featuring the terms "Bengali" and "terrorist". [359] Most of them were published within about half a year after the 2017 counterinsurgency campaign. In fact, the website of Min Aung Hlaing was set up in late August 2017. This indicates that in reaction to the 2017 crisis, the military ramped up its efforts to frame its assault as legitimate reaction against foreign terrorism and illegal immigration.

A later statement by the Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services denies that security forces or administrative bodies are involved in forcing people to leave their home. The large-scale migration is allegedly rooted in insecurity caused by the terrorist attacks and "news that Bengali terrorists set fire to houses, threaten those who remain in villages and persuade them to flee to Bangladesh"[360] In total, the Facebook statements sum up the increasing radicalisation of anti-Muslim sentiments. At first the existence of a dedicated Rohingya ethnic

---

[356] "Entire Government Institutions and People Must Defend the Country with Strong Patriotism,"
https://www.facebook.com/seniorgeneralminaunghlaing/posts/1698274643540350.
[357] Ibid.
[358] "Duties and Actions Must Be in Line with the Law,"
https://www.facebook.com/seniorgeneralminaunghlaing/posts/1711630188871462.
[359] https://www.seniorgeneralminaunghlaing.com.mm/en/ (results obtained through a google "site:search",
which allows to search a certain website and subdomains for the specified keywords)
[360] Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services, "The Stance on the Terrorist Attacks of the Extremist
Bengalis in Buthidaung-Maungtaw Region in Rakhine State " https://www.facebook.com/Cincds/posts/the-
stance-on-the-terrorist/1492836477503879/.

group was denied, later they were vilified and labelled as terrorist that aim to conquer Rakhine lands. While the Armed Forces Day speeches attract a nationwide audience and considerable attention of international media, the social media outlets are likely to be consumed by a Tatmadaw-friendly audience. Thus, they demonstrate that rhetoric of military actors gets harsher, once they can be sure that their target audience is in favour of their attitude.

The latest speech is more refined and shows a more elaborate choice of words (which might be attributed to a more professional translation service). The failure of the Parliamentary era is not attributed to ethnic insurgencies anymore but to "divided rules of the colonialists as well as different political background and ideology."[361] Furthermore, the post-independence Burma faced "political and administrative instabilities [which] arose due to the weakness of parliamentary democracy, and inadequacy in democracy experience and practice".[362] This led to paranoia and an inability to address the issues of ethnic affairs adequately, cumulating in disintegration of the Union.[363] This implies that not the insurgencies brought end to the Burmese Federation, but the flawed conditions left by the colonisers as well as an inadequate political system. To preserve newly gained independence, "the Army led by General Ne Win fought the multi-coloured insurgents with the strength present."[364] Accordingly, the military was the crucial force in securing Burma's peace and progress, saving the union from disintegration. According to Hlaing, the Tatmadaw is therefore capable of securing peace through the safeguarding of the political system, taking the helm only if necessary. Over all, the 2018 speech underlines the role of the Tatmadaw as enduring guardian of security and guarantor of the unobstructed function of governmental organs.

In this speech, the Senior General makes no reference to the Rohingya and the violence and flows of migration in 2017. Nevertheless, regarding previous Mujahedeen uprisings in western Myanmar, shortly after the country's independence, he uses the derogatory term "Kalar" when referring to the Muslims.[365] The fact that after the 2017 violence historical grievances, in the form of previous Muslim rebellions, are brought up show the Tatmadaw's active involvement in creating a negative perception of Burmese Muslims. Concerning the contemporary situation of ethnic groups, Hlaing remarks,

---

[361]Min Aung Hlaing, "All People Should Bear in Mind "Myanmar Spirit" without Racial and Religious Discrimination, and to Strive for the Country's Development in Cohesive Union (Speech Delivered at the Annual Armed Forces Day)," https://www.facebook.com/seniorgeneralminaunghlaing/posts/1922289607805518.
[362] Ibid.
[363] Ibid.
[364] Ibid.
[365] "Myanmar (Burma): Snr-Gen Min Aung Hlaing's Armed Forces Day Speeches."

> For many years, over 130 ethnic groups had coexisted peacefully in Myanmar. Among ethnic groups, some are up to hundred-thousands but some are just handful by population. However, population is not the main matter and rights are equitable for all kinds of ethnics as the Constitution states. Although the majority believes in Buddhism, there has also been freedom of worship for other religions. Thus, speech causing illusion must be restrained in relation to religion." He later added, "The development for the areas of the national races is of great importance to stability and peace of the border areas.[366]

Looking at the articulation on the one hand, we find a glorification of the unity of the various ethnic Burmese and a commitment to equal rights and freedoms to every of this group, regardless of their size or power. This stands in contrast to the previous prosecution and expulsion of the Rohingya. On the other hand, Min Aung Hlaing targeted inflammatory speech. This could be interpreted as directed against Buddhist monks that propagate a national narrative that portrays Buddhism as the essential characteristic of Burmeseness, a concept that has to be protected from external threats. Alternatively, it can be read as directed against Rohingya Muslim that argue for an inclusion of the Rohingya into the national races. In both cases, it is implied that religious matters, as dictated by the Burmese law, must not be used for political goals.

The position of the Tatmadaw is summed up in Table 2. What is remarkable about Myanmar's military is that is leadership frequently glorifies the past and a unity between the Burmese ethnic groups. This allow them declare anyone who threatens the unity an enemy to the future development of Myanmar. In the democratising country, the military furthermore tries to maintain a positive image of a vital guardian in order to consolidate its reserved seats in parliament. Thus an alleged threat, be it immigration or terrorism, is an opportunity for the Tatmadaw to demonstrate its indispensability as a capable armed force and political actor. The military leadership thus was on the forefront of the securitisation of the ARSA-attacks and vilification of Rohingya civilians (see Table 2).

Quote	Interpretation	Implication
"Protection of democracy"	Reliant on positive public opinion. As soon as role as protector is questioned, inclusion in national parliaments fragile	Arguments for increased security and a lowered threshold to engage in armed conflict

---

[366] "All People Should Bear in Mind "Myanmar Spirit" without Racial and Religious Discrimination, and to Strive for the Country's Development in Cohesive Union (Speech Delivered at the Annual Armed Forces Day)".

"If there is no unity, only losses and decreases will be found"	Glorification of a mythical unity among ethnic groups	Easy to target dissident ethic groups and portray threat to unity as threat to country
"The Bengalis in Rakhine State are not the Myanmar nationalities but the immigrants"	Adherence to ethnic nationalism	Rohingya casted as outsiders and subject to treatment as immigrants and thus a moderate security threat
"Bengali attacked murdered and coerced them into leaving their home"	Glorification of mythical past and evoking of a long-standing Muslim aggressor	Refer to primordial competition and myth of inherent hostility (they did it before and might try it again)
"ARSA extremist Bengali terrorists" "build a stronghold"	Rohingya unilaterally linked to international terrorism	Civilians suspected of collaboration Securitisation and justification for extensive countermeasures

TABLE 2 – TATMADAW

4.3 AUNG SAN SUU KYI AND THE NATIONAL LEAGUE FOR DEMOCRACY

Suu Kyi's image as a humanitarian head of state may only be superseded by the reputations of Ghandi or Nelson Mandela. As figurehead of the party who pulls all the strings, her public opinion is widely indicatory for the party. Being part of the political opposition and later de-facto head of state confronted her with enormous expectations to foster reconciliation and human rights in Myanmar. However, while in office, she was not able to live up to the high moral standards she referred to while being an oppositional figure. Especially campaigns of ethnic cleansing in Myanmar have brought harsh criticism on her. In the following, her attitudes as an oppositional figure and as state chancellor will be analysed. For both periods, special attention will be payed on the statements regarding human rights, criticism on military operations and the situation of Rohingya.

4.3.1 SUU KYI IN THE OPPOSITION

After being released from house arrest, Suu Kyi was able to retrieve her Nobel Peace Prize in person in 2012 and deliver a speech. A central topic of her address was the suffering of oppressed and displaced people within Myanmar and democracy and human rights. Like military generals before her, she noted, "Burma is a country of many ethnic nationalities and

faith in its future be founded only on a true spirit of union."[367] Instead of "national races", she used "ethnic nationalities". Though a slightly more suitable term, it still involves the same ascription of citizenship rights tied to ethnicity. Suu Kyi furthermore explained that she considers democratic institutions and practices a necessity for the prevalence of human rights. Consequently, she promised to "create a world free from the displaced, the homeless and the hopeless. A world of which each and every corner is a true sanctuary where the inhabitants will have the freedom and capacity to live in peace."[368] Although she underlined her perception of human rights as a universal birth right of all, her later statements and actions do not fulfil this high standard. When receiving her Nobel Peace, she was confronted with the question if Rohingya should be treated as citizens. Her answer, "I don't know" and a general failure to express sympathy caused widespread criticism among observers.[369]

4.3.2 STATEMENTS AROUND THE 2012 BY-ELECTION

During the 2012 by-election campaign, Suu Kyi opened a TV address with a commitment to basic principles of democracy and citizen's rights. According to Suu Kyi, "Not only voters, but all the citizens as well, have the right to decide which party and who they will vote for."[370] As on many other occasions, what standard is applied to determine who qualifies as citizen is not mentioned. Suu Kyi additionally uses the term *national races* multiple times. On the word of Suu Kyi, failing to protect them is one of the reason for the disintegration of the union and the lasting military dictatorship.[371] She furthermore renews the goal of establishing a federal union based on the ethnic composition of the country.[372] Yet the use of the term "national races" shows that Suu Kyi had no intention of reforming the concept of citizenship.

Addressing sectarian strife in 2012, Aung San Suu Kyi identified fear of illegal immigration as the core of the violence between Buddhist and Muslims in Myanmar. Her proposed solution did not differ from the previous military course. She proposed stricter control

---

[367] Aung San Suu Kyi, "Aung San Suu Kyi - Nobel Lecture," The Nobel Foundation,
https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1991/kyi-lecture_en.html.
[368] Ibid.
[369] Jerome Taylor, "Burma's Rohingya Muslims: Aung San Suu Kyi's Blind Spot," The Independent,
https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/burmas-rohingya-muslims-aung-san-suu-kyis-blind-spot-8061619.html.
[370] Hintha, "(English) Aung San Suu Kyi's 2012 Campaign Tv Speech W/ English Subtitles," (youtube.com, 2012). [0:08-0:23].
[371] Ibid. [03:21-03:34].
[372] Ibid. [03:57-04:16].

of the borders and better citizenship laws. She added, "That those deemed worthy of citizenship, should get all the legal benefits."[373]

As leading figure of the opposition, Suu Kyi did not hesitate to point out that the flawed constitution prevents Burma from making a proper democratic transition. However, with an eye on the 2015 election, she downplayed the severity of ethnic conflict between Muslim and Buddhists in the country and refused to address the origin of xenophobia in Myanmar. In an interview with the BBC Suu Kyi commented, "It's not ethnic cleansing. It's a new problem, and yet it's linked to old problems as well."[374] She continues, "These problems arose last year and I think this is due to fear on both sides."[375] She overlooked that the majority of victims in the violent clashes in Myanmar were Muslims and points out that Buddhists were subjected to violence and displacement as well. Addressing the underlying cause of the conflict Suu Kyi stated, "That the reaction of the Buddhists is also based on fear"[376] which is rooted in the perception that growing global Muslim power is a threat to Burma. This implied that Buddhist and nationalist mobilisation is not less an active element in the hostilities towards Muslims, but rather a reaction to outside events. While still in the position of a challenger to the incumbent government, she also considered the inability of the military dictatorship, and its proxy the USDP, to foster trust between citizens of all groups as well reluctance to create mechanisms of accountability as factor causing ethnic tension in the country.[377] Suu Kyi did not hesitate to blame the military, government and constitution for the failure to settle ethnic conflict. However, through victimisation of Buddhists and labelling the conflict as a rooted in history – instead of exacerbated through recent anti-Muslim rhetoric – she fails to address core issues of the problem. This would include considering a contributory fault of nationalist Buddhists. Even as part of the opposition, Suu Kyi did not dare to consider this a possibility because it would have surely infuriated her Buddhist supporters.

---

[373] Hanna Hindstrom, "Suu Kyi: "We Need Precise Laws on Citizenship"," Democratic Voice of Burma, http://www.dvb.no/news/suu-kyi-%E2%80%9Cwe-need-precise-laws-on-citizenship%E2%80%9D/22447.
[374] BBC News, "Suu Kyi Blames Burma Violence on 'Climate of Fear'," (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2013)., [0:40-0:47].
[375] Ibid., [0:53-0:59].
[376] Ibid., [1:29 – 1:32].
[377] Ibid., [2:13 – 4:04].

4.3.3 SUU KYI AS A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT

In her first speech in Parliament in 2012, she urged to address poverty in ethnic minority areas and "to discuss the enactment of the laws needed to protect equal rights of ethnicities."[378] However, she did not make any special reference to the Rohingya people. This strategy of demanding development and rights for ethnic minorities, which conveniently omits Rohingya, will stick to her until the present day.

While part of the opposition, Suu Kyi stressed that Myanmar is a multi-ethnic state. Based on her ideals of universal civil and political rights she proposed constitutional change in Myanmar with special attention to the representation of disenfranchised minorities.[379] In specific cases however, Suu Kyi refrained from criticising the military's operation, despite her commitment to human rights. Yet, she adheres to the concept of ethnic nationalities, just like her predecessors. This allows arguing for exclusion of Rohingya from political participation and a rejection of citizen's status and rights. Already prior to occupying important political positions, she downplayed the severity of ethnic tension and grudges toward Rohingya. Regarding this issue, she sided with the Burmese Buddhists and portrays contentions as result of fears of illegal immigration and Muslim expansion, yet failed to address this issue through initiating a multilateral dialogue. Obviously rational calculations determined her publicly displayed attitude. The former Secretary General of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), Professor Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu summed up as, "Aung San Suu Kyi has little to gain from speaking out against treatment of the Rohingya. She is no longer a political dissident trying to stick to her principles. She's a politician and her eyes are fixed on the prize, which is the 2015 majority Buddhist vote."[380]

4.3.4 SUU KYI AND NLD AS RULING PARTY

Since the NLD took over the country's governance in early 2016, the military launched two major campaigns in which Rohingya presumably fell victim to systematic human rights violation and destruction of their property. The NLD and Aung San Suu Kyi have so far failed

---

[378] BBC News, "Burma's Suu Kyi Urges Minority Rights," BBC, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-18979410.

[379] East-West Center, "Aung San Suu Kyi," (vimeo.com, 2013). [18:28-18:48].

[380] Maung Zarni, "Buddhist Nationalism in Burma," Tricycle.com, https://subscribe.tricycle.com/TRI/?f=donate&_ga=2.143163701.1867242302.1536238370-1407872778.1536238370.

to account adequately for the events of 2016 and 2017. Regardless of previous commitments to a multi-ethnic state and promises of economic and constitutional reform in the state, the situation for Rohingya has in fact deteriorated significantly. Looking at positions taken by Suu Kyi and her party comrades, it is obvious that a will to address the Rohingya's situation and to propose a solution was and is absent. The recent strategy is a mix of accepting the military's independence, denying allegations, victim shaming and referring to a terrorist threat. Nevertheless, this scheme was already visible before the ARSA attacks of 2017 and the resulting retaliation. In May 2016, Aung San Suu Kyi advised the US embassy in Myanmar not to use the term Rohingya. According to the New York Times, the foreign ministry official Kyaw Zay Ya, previously declared, "Our position is that using the controversial term does not support the national reconciliation process and solving problems."[381] Through regarding the term "Rohingya" as an obstacle to national reconciliation, the government demonstrated that it tries to suppress Rohingya claims to nativity and favours their expulsion in the long run.

4.3.5 HIDING BEHIND ALIBI COMMISSIONS

International attention on the Rakhine State Crisis caused the Burmese government to allow international investigation. But the results are mostly ignored. Myanmar officials rather rely on their national (and clearly biased) reports. The UN fact-finding mission by Kofi Annan was rejected as a foreign intervention in internal affair by the Burmese public.[382] The Rakhine State Parliament even rejected the commission's findings and legitimacy.[383] The central government seemingly does not take the commission's advice serious. The implementation of the commission's recommendations for addressing the citizenship crisis and socioeconomic development have been insufficient, causing critics to claim that Myanmar uses the Commission as a shield to deflect accusations and dodge responsibilities.[384]

Although the Burmese government has set up commissions to investigate violent incidents and uprisings in Rakhine state, the results and research methods are heavily criticised

---

[381] Richard C. Paddock, "Aung San Suu Kyi Asks U.S. Not to Refer to 'Rohingya'," The New York Times, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/07/world/asia/myanmar-rohingya-aung-san-suu-kyi.html.
[382] Cameroon Intelligence Report, "Kofi Annan on a Fact-Finding Mission in Myanmar," http://www.cameroonintelligencereport.com/kofi-annan-on-a-fact-finding-mission-in-myanmar/.
[383] Yi Ywal Myint, "Rejection of Rakhine Advisory Body Approved by State Hluttaw," The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/nay-pyi-taw/22535-rejection-of-rakhine-advisory-body-approved-by-state-hluttaw.html.
[384] Fortify Rights, "Myanmar: Implement Recommendations of Kofi Annan-Led Commission," Reliefweb.int, https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-implement-recommendations-kofi-annan-led-commission.

by international organisations as the UNHCR and Human Rights Watch. According to government's investigation of the 2016 violence, no cases of murder, rape and arson can be attributed to the Burmese security forces. Apart from denying any occurrence of genocidal acts, the government-issued reports purposefully direct attention to acts of terrorism and arson as well as killing and intimidation of natives allegedly conducted by "terrorist groups".[385] Myint Swe, Vice President of Myanmar, additionally claimed, "Some people from abroad have fabricated news claiming genocide had occurred."[386] Burmese officials also declared incidents of rape were "terrorist fabrications", spread by biased foreign news agencies.[387] This stands in contrast to the claims that were made by Rohingya refugees to human rights organisations[388] and a surge in the birth rate among Rohingya exactly 9 months after the 2017 refugee exodus.[389]

In October 2017, Suu Kyi declared that she would lead the newly formed Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine. The organisation is meant to connect stakeholders, the central government and aid organisations in order to address the human rights crisis in Rakhine State.[390] Announcing the organisation, Suu Kyi talks about challenges, "the Rakhine issue", "terrorist attacks" and "those who are now in Bangladesh", yet the whole speech does not contain the term Rohingya.[391] Demonstrating the indifference towards Rohingya, website of the Union Enterprise prominently introduces the affected Rakhine nationalities, but omits Muslims or let alone Rohingya.[392]

A tangible reaction to the Rohingya crisis occurred more than half a year later. With the military facing a loss of partners and Suu Kyi confronted with shrinking FDI, [393] Suu Kyi signalled the will to cooperate with UN human rights and development organisations in May 2018. The government declared that it will set up an independent commission for the

---

[385] Human Rights Watch, "Burma: National Commission Denies Atrocities," Human Rights Watch, https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/08/07/burma-national-commission-denies-atrocities.

[386] Reuters, "Govt Rejects Allegations of Human Rights Abuses in Rakhine," The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/govt-rejects-allegations-human-rights-abuses-rakhine.html.

[387] State Counsellor Office Information Committee, "Information Committee Refutes Rumours of Rape," The Republic of the Union of Myanmar - State Counsellor Office, http://www.statecounsellor.gov.mm/en/node/551.

[388] Human Rights Watch, "Burma: Security Forces Raped Rohingya Women, Girls," Human Rights Watch, https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/02/06/burma-security-forces-raped-rohingya-women-girls.

[389] United Nations, "For Rohingya Refugees, Imminent Surge in Births Is Traumatic Legacy of Sexual Violence - Special Report," UN News, For Rohingya Refugees, Imminent Surge in Births is Traumatic Legacy of Sexual Violence - Special Report.

[390] Nyein Nyein, "State Counselor Forms Enterprise on Rakhine State, Calls for 'Unity'," The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/state-counselor-forms-enterprise-rakhine-state-calls-unity.html.

[391] Aung San Suu Kyi, "Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Report on the Rakhine Crisis," Voltairenet, http://www.voltairenet.org/article198352.html.

[392] http://www.rakhine.unionenterprise.org/ [accessed 28.12.2018]

[393] Motokazu Matsui, "Myanmar's Foreign Direct Investment Rush Recedes," The Financial Times, https://www.ft.com/content/f7bda5bc-e150-11e6-8405-9e5580d6e5fb.

investigation of human rights violations in Rakhine and signed a Memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the UN and UNHCR on the strategy for refugee repatriation. [394] Meanwhile, a team of UN diplomats was able to visit the troubled regions. [395] They note some positive efforts in rebuilding villages and setting up facilities for the repatriation of refugees. Despite these positive efforts, the diplomats also criticise that the infrastructure, as it is now, can only manage a few hundred refugees per day. [396] Myanmar's Social Welfare Minister encouraged refugees to return and promised the construction of new villages with hospitals and schools, in addition to the issuing of national verification cards (NVC). These cards would make the holder eligible to apply for Burmese citizenship but do not grant full citizen's rights by themselves.[397] Despite criticisms by the UN that "conditions in Myanmar are not yet conducive for returns to be safe, dignified, and sustainable",[398] the government began repatriating selected families. The process of repatriation has otherwise been sluggish. Out of more than 600.000 refugees a list of 10.000 people has been created, of which 600 have been verified.[399] According to Suu Kyi, the Burmese government has "carried out all [the] responsibilities in line with the MoU."[400] She now considers Bangladesh responsible to inform refugees about the possibilities and process of repatriation in order to initiate the return of displaced people. Blaming the need for profound negotiations and moving responsibilities to partners fits her strategy of passiveness and hushing up the problem. Apparently, she is still convinced that the problem will disappear when criticism fades over time.

In sum, we can see that the government appeals to the domestic audience by questioning the results of external commissions while simultaneously opening up to deepened scrutiny in order to satisfy the international community. But implementation of concrete measures has been inadequate and Burmese investigations fail to address human rights violation and accountability.

---

[394] Taro Kono, "Establishment of an Independent Commission of Enquiry by the Myanmar Government and the Agreement on the Memorandum of Understanding (Mou) between Myanmar Government and the Un Agencies Concerning Their Activities in Northern Rakhine State," news release, 2018, https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press1e_000070.html.

[395] Patrick Wintour, "Aung San Suu Kyi Seeks New Relationship with Un over Rohingya Crisis " The Guardian, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/28/aung-san-suu-kyi-un-relationship-rohingya-crisis.

[396] "Briefing by Security Council Mission to Bangladesh and Myanmar," (New York: United Nations Security Council, 2018).

[397] Reuters, "Myanmar Minister Assures Rohingya in Bangladesh Repatriation Is a Priority," The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-minister-assures-rohingya-bangladesh-repatriation-priority.html.

[398] UNHCR, "Bangladesh and Unhcr Agree on Voluntary Returns Framework for When Refugees Decide Conditions Are Right " UNHCR, http://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2018/4/5ad061d54/bangladesh-unhcr-agree-voluntary-returns-framework-refugees-decide-conditions.html.

[399] Luke Hunt, "The Trouble with Myanmar and Rohingya Repatriation," *The Diplomat*, 2018 Apr 20 2018.

[400] Orie Sugimoto and Aung San Suu Kyi, "Exclusive: Interview with Aung San Suu Kyi," Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK), https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/nhknewsline/inconversation/exclusiveaungsansuukyi/.

4.3.6 Build-up and reaction to the 2017 violence

In an interview with the BBC's Fergal Keane in April 2017, Aung San Suu Kyi underlined her will to alter the powerful position of the Tatmadaw. The NLD government strives to amend the constitution towards a federal constitution, which should limit the army's independence. Once again, she shied away from addressing human rights violations and possible misconduct by the military. Su Kyi remarked,

> I don't think there is ethnic cleansing going on. I think ethnic cleansing is to strong an expression to use for what's happening. […]I think there's a lot of hostility there and as I pointed out just now its Muslims killing Muslims as well if they think that they are collaborating with the authorities. So it's not just a matter of ethnic cleansing as you put it. It's a matter of people on different sides of a divide and this divide we are trying to close up as best as possible.[401]

When confronted with human rights violations in Rakhine and her continuing silence Suu Kyi proposed that economic development and the national verification process, which grants citizenship to those who are entitled to it, are the path to harmony and eventually to the solution.[402] By implying that other communities are similarly affected, she blurred the facts and opened the door for arguments in favour of empowerment of local Buddhist communities. Conveniently, she avoided saying that especially the economic situation in the Rohingya communities needs to be improved. Suu Kyi countered the allegations of insufficient development in Muslim communities with the question why Muslims conducted attacks on border outpost, despite government - introduced development programs in the region.[403]

In a speech, celebrating the one-year anniversary of the NLD government, Suu Kyi remarks that Myanmar has "many ethnic nationalities as well as many different religions." [404] She once again made commitments to development and ethnic reconciliation. Nevertheless, she omits to clarify who the accepted individuals and ethnic nationalities are or how to solve the denial of this status to the Rohingya. The previous resolution by the UN Human Rights Council is waved aside as "not keeping with the realities and it's against the interest of our country."[405]

---

[401] BBC News, "Myanmar: Aung San Suu Kyi Exclusive Interview," (BBC News, 2017)., [08:10-08:46] .
[402] Ibid.
[403] Ibid.
[404] Aung San Suu Kyi, "State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech on the Occasion of the One Year Anniversary of the Government (30 March 2017)," news release, 2017, http://www.statecounsellor.gov.mm/en/node/798.
[405] Ibid.

Like on previous accounts, in-depth examination of the topic is portrayed as an obstacle to the national development.

In September 2017, Suu Kyi skipped the annual United Nations General Assembly in order to avoid to be confronted with the campaign against the Rohingya. In later speech, she condemned human rights violations but failed to admit misconduct by the military or at least question its strategy. James Gomez, director for South East Asia and the Pacific at Amnesty International, criticised her speech as "little more than a mix of untruths and victim blaming." He pointed out that her statements regarding openness to international scrutiny in Rakhine State, segregation of Rohingya, and an allegedly "clean" military campaign are proven wrong by reality.[406]

In her speech in national reconciliation and peace, Aung San Suu Kyi underlined the government's "belief in the capacity of nations to unite" but also the need "to work together because we belong to one nation."[407] Her phrasing shows that she adheres to the concept of ethnic nationalism where a multitude of ethnic groups forms a unified nation. Essential for this concept is that groups mutually recognise each other and that group rights are protected. The core of ethnic nationalism, that citizenship is tied to the belonging to a certain ethnicity remains unchanged.

As usual, Suu Kyi circumvented the term Rohingya. In the 30-minute speech, the term Muslim is used 11 times, whereas Rohingya is only mentioned once, when naming the ARSA. In general, the term Muslim is used when talking about Rohingya. A slight moderation can be observed as terms as "Bengali" or "illegal immigrants" is not used in order justify the military's operations as defence of national sovereignty or the like. The state counsellor instead expresses that the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army is "responsible for acts of terrorism, as a terrorist group in accordance with the Counter-Terrorism Law."[408] Making use of the term "terrorist organisation" was a novelty in Myanmar's counter-insurgency strategy. Despite having similar strategies to other ethnic armed groups in Myanmar, ARSA is considered a terrorist organisation, which has serious implications. Above all, do security operations directed at terrorism gain more domestic approval. Due to widespread support, extensive campaigns like

---

[406] Amnesty International, "Myanmar: Aung San Suu Kyi "Burying Her Head in the Sand" About Rakhine Horrors," Amnesty International, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/09/myanmar-aung-san-suu-kyi-burying-her-head-in-the-sand-about-rakhine-horrors/.

[407] Aung San Suu Kyi, "Speech Delivered by Her Excellency Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on Government's Efforts with Regard to National Reconciliation and Peace " news release, 2017, http://www.myanmarembassydhaka.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/SC-speech-transcription-Final-_19-9-2017__2.pdf.

[408] Ibid.

the "four cuts" are more likely. Myanmar's anti-terrorism laws contains additional flaws. Melissa Crouch criticised that the legal body lacks safeguards and a requirement to present evidence in order to declare a group to be a terrorist organisation. More worryingly, the Anti-Terrorism Committee is controlled by the military and military as well as the committee enjoy freedom of prosecution. This is a critical defect when considered, that the Anti-terrorism law includes death penalty, a financial reward for arresting or reporting terrorists and the possibility to surveil individuals and their electronic communication.[409]

Aung San Suu Kyi's speech continued with a blunt promise to protect human rights: "Action will be taken against all peoples, regardless of their religion, race, or political position who go against the laws of the land and who violate human right […].We have never been soft on human rights in this country."[410] The first part of the statement omits that the Burmese law grants freedom of legal prosecution to military personnel. In the light of Myanmar's long list of human rights violations, the second part is just a farce.

Additionally, Aung San Suu Kyi relativized the atrocities and scale of migration in Rakhine state on several occasions. Suu Kyi For example said, "I think it is very little known that the great majority of Muslims in the Rakhine State have not joined the exodus. More than 50% of the villages of Muslims are intact"[411], which is doubted by analysts but remains hard to disprove due to lack of access for independent investigators.[412]

Moreover, Suu Kyi proposed: "All people living in the Rakhine state have access to education and healthcare services without discrimination."[413] This stands in stark contrast to the findings Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, which, among other practices of discrimination and intolerance, points out that Rohingya in Rakhine state lack unrestricted access to healthcare and education.[414] She furthermore declared that military operations had already come to a halt on fifth of September, which is contradicted by credible

---

[409] Melissa Crouch, "The Twisted Politics of Terrorism in Myanmar," Lowy Institute, https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/threat-terrorism-too-convenient-myanma.

[410] Suu Kyi, "Speech Delivered by Her Excellency Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on Government's Efforts with Regard to National Reconciliation and Peace ".

[411] Ibid.

[412] Oliver Holmes, "Fact Check: Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech on the Rohingya Crisis " The Guardian, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/20/fact-check-aung-san-suu-kyi-rohingya-crisis-speech-myanmar.

[413] Suu Kyi, "Speech Delivered by Her Excellency Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on Government's Efforts with Regard to National Reconciliation and Peace ".

[414] United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, "Situation of Human Rights of Rohingya Muslims and Other Minorities in Myanmar," in *Annual Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and Reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General*, ed. Human Rights Council (United Nations, 2016).

reports, backed up by satellite imagery, data and visual evidence.[415] In sum, Suu Kyi obscures that in the affected region Rohingya were the target of a campaign that was called a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing"[416], which eventually caused 90% of the Rohingya in the affected area to flee.[417]

Over half a year after the crisis in Rakhine occurred, it seemed not to be a matter of importance for the domestic audience. In the speech in the second anniversary of NLD government Suu Kyi makes no reference to Rakhine, refugees, repatriation or Muslims. The only remarkable statement of her speech is the assessment that mutual respect and understanding are the foundation to end armed conflicts among ethnic nationalities.[418] Given the fact that Rohingya are neither mentioned in her speech, nor included in the concept of *ethnic nationalities* Suu Kyi's speech once again shows that she neglects to address the issue and adheres to the concept of Myanmar's ethnic nationalism.

Addressing a foreign audience, Suu Kyi considered moderate words and promises for development are adequate to approach the issue. Regarding discrimination, distrust and animosity in Rakhine state Suu Kyi identified little prosperity and lack of security in the region as a driving force. Her approach for conflict solution consequently focuses on the rule of law and economic development. She did not propose a plan to address deep-seated intercommunal tensions through dialogue and remarked that these issues occur in more advanced, long-standing democracies as well. The state counsellor carefully admitted that unlike established democracies, Myanmar's government has not sufficient control over the military. Yet she hesitated to openly accuse the military of being a factor in conflict escalation in Rakhine state by refuting, "The strength of the military […] has any direct effect on what's happening in Rakhine."[419] Once more, Suu Kyi did not use the term "Rohingya", nor did she refer to Muslims. In fact, she downplays the severity of the situation by referring to it "as a challenge, rather than a problem."[420] Downplaying the importance of the situation goes hand in hand with a reluctance to tackle the issue.

---

[415] "'My World Is Finished' - Rohingya Targeted in Crimes against Humanity in Myanmar.", 39.

[416] Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein, "Darker and More Dangerous: High Commissioner Updates the Human Rights Council on Human Rights Issues in 40 Countries," United Nations Human Rights Office Of The High Commissioner, https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22041&LangID=E.

[417] Moe Myint, "Ninety Percent of Rohingya Population Ejected from Rakhine," The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/specials/ninety-percent-rohingya-population-ejected-rakhine.html.

[418] Aung San Suu Kyi, "State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech on the 2nd Anniversary of Nld Government," The Global Light of Myanmar, http://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/state-counsellor-daw-aung-san-suu-kyis-speech-2nd-anniversary-nld-government/.

[419] Sugimoto and Suu Kyi, "Exclusive: Interview with Aung San Suu Kyi".

[420] Ibid.

The government's representative to the United Nations addressed the UN in a letter in June 2018. Naming the half-hearted efforts of the Burmese government to facilitate a return of refugees and establishing investigative commissions, the government once again hides behind its own marginal measures or portrays overdue steps as significant improvement. Creating the image of addressing human rights violations, the latter refers to a case where members of security forces have been convicted – a case that is far less justice but a scapegoating of low-rank personnel to whitewash the military and Myanmar's image.[421] The letter quickly moves on from addressing the accountability of Burmese forces to the role of the ARSA, which is portrayed as the root cause for igniting the crisis in Rakhine State by launching terrorist attacks without provocation. The letter furthermore reads, "The current round of violence in Rakhine has rapidly morphed from communal tension into an issue of terrorism that threatens Myanmar's national security and sovereignty."[422] It is obvious that the government tries to propagate its narrative of a terrorist threat to national security, in order to secure international support and justify military campaigns. It also shows that the government tries to label previous violence as communal violence, which discharges security forces of any guilt and overlooks the factor of deliberate ethnic mobilisation.

In sum, the so-called "Rakhine State Crisis" did not significantly alter the position of NLD politicians and Aung San Suu Kyi. The rhetoric is still coined by denial of human rights abuses, need for cooperation and vague promises of reconciliation. The military still enjoys a position in which it is practically unaccountable. Suu Kyi's silence, downplaying of the severity and failure to criticise the military surely are a factor that benefitted the extensive military campaigns. Firstly, they contributed to the public perception that Rohingya are outsiders with no rightful claim to citizenship. Secondly, it encouraged extremist personalities to spread their narrative and in return confirmed the hostile mindset of chauvinist people. And thirdly, it gave the military enough public support and confidence in its impunity to carry out the operations. For more than a year, the Suu Kyi –government seemed like it planned to sit out the troubles, reinforcing the impression that she is "burying the head in the sand". Interviews with Burmese diplomats and government officials confirm that the country's leadership thinks it just needs "to wait out the storm of international criticism."[423] Meanwhile the settlement of Rakhine

---

[421] Joshua Carroll, "Myanmar's Brutal Military Is Convicting Its Own Soldiers of Atrocities," Foreign Policy, https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/06/27/myanmars-brutal-military-is-convicting-its-own-soldiers-of-war-crimes/.
[422] Hao Do Suan, "Letter Dated 27 June 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Myanmar to the United Nations Addressed to the President of the Security Council," (United Nations Security Council, 2018)., 2.
[423] "Myanmar's Stalled Transition," in *Crisis Group Asia Briefing*, ed. International Crisis Group (Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2018)., 7.

people in the border region could hamper the repatriation of Rohingya refugees – a fact that would by welcomed by big parts of the Burmese population and politicians alike.

Only international pressure initiated a discernible shift. Starting from the second quarter of 2018, Burmese authorities increasingly facilitated access for humanitarian and investigation through international commissions. Nonetheless did Burmese efforts start too late and with insufficient assertiveness. However, a shift in the official narrative regarding Rohingya looms ahead. The notion that illegal immigration is the main problem in Rakhine is increasingly replaced. Instead of "Bengali immigrants", a lack of development and security in the region are given as reasons. This is no all-clear signal; officials also increasingly refer to a terrorist threat and threat to national security. This is by no mean an improvement from the Rohingya's perspective. On the contrary, being portrayed as a threat is a major obstacle for repatriation and the obtaining of citizen's rights. Suu Kyi's and the NLD's attitude and the implications for Rohingya are summed up in Table 3. Remarkably, the party failed to counteract and regulate the increasingly hostile discourse by the time of its inauguration. Later on, it is responsible for officially declaring ARSA a terrorist organisation, confirming and institutionalising the narrative of many nationalist actors in Myanmar.

Quote	Interpretation	Implication
"Many ethnic nationalities and faith in its future be founded only on a true spirit of union"	Glorified union and adherence to ethnic nationalism	Rohingya still excluded from obtaining citizenship Ethnic Unity as cornerstone for federal union
"It's not ethnic cleansing", "Problems […] due to fear on both sides" Never uses term "Rohingya" "Protect equal rights of ethnicities" "All people in Rakhine have access to education and healthcare"	Denial of severity and failure to hold military accountable Blames conflict as rooted in history and not caused by recent mobilisation Ignores Rohingya completely and makes false statements about protection of HR and situation in Rakhine	Attempts to downplay the situation or hide head in the sand and thus passively encouragement of chauvinist mobilisation and military operations
"Issue of terrorism that threatens Myanmar's national security" replaces "illegal immigrants"	Securitisation: Terrorist narrative replaces illegal immigration and becomes official	Paves the way for military operations and solidifier permanent deportation

TABLE 3- SUU KYI AND NLD

4.4. SUMMARY

Along with most political and societal actors within Myanmar, the USDP's adherence to the concept of national races remained unchanged. Naturally, in a multi-ethnic state the concept of ethnic nationalism is an effective tool in shaping the national identity and unifying various groups under the umbrella of a diverse nation, declaring unity a precondition for a prosperous state. This process of nation building was initiated decades ago under an authoritarian one-party rule. It provided the leadership a powerful tool to define the country's natives as well as unwanted elements, as the definitions were imposed top down through state institutions.[424] Since majority of Burmese have settled with the concept of an ethnic nation, the USDP had no benefit from departing from the concept, let alone altering it to accommodate Rohingya. On the contrary, together with the citizenship laws it is a convenient tool to argue for their non-belonging.

The USDP government adopted the narrative of Bengali immigrants from previous military governments. The anti-Muslim language of the USPD alternated between denunciations as "Bengali" to a denial of the existence of a Rohingya ethnicity. Especially in the run up for the 2012 by-election, the allegations of illegal immigration or "imported labourers" gained prominence in public statements by the USDP leadership. In a blunt foray, the president even suggested a deportation. As this was not received favourably outside of Myanmar, he suggested advancing the citizenship verification process, which would de facto change the Rohingya's status from tolerated to excluded and deprived of any rights.

The party itself appeared not so much as a driving force in spreading inflammatory speech or demanding a harsher course against Muslims. It rather reacted to prevalent sentiments and demands in order to consolidate its position and competitiveness in the elections. The more active elements in the creation of the anti-Muslim narrative were local Rakhine parties and extremist Buddhists, which the USDP government never criticised or regulated. The party climbed on the bandwagon of the growing Islamophobia, motivated by the aim to consolidate by. In this course, it behaved opportunistic but rational. It had previously approached white card holders in order to secure a majority over the RNDP. As competition with the NLD on a national level became the more pressing issue, the USDP clearly sided with nationalist and conservative religious forces and stripped white card holders, mostly Rohingya of their voting rights. The

---

[424] Cheesman, "How in Myanmar "National Races" Came to Surpass Citizenship and Exclude Rohingya.", 5-10.

discourse about an alleged Muslim threat allowed the USDP to portray itself as a protector of Buddhist interests. Through implementation of protectionist laws, drafted and lobbied by religious organisations, the USDP formed an alliance with nationalists.

The military's position towards the Rohingya has evolved, but not changed significantly, during the democratic transition. In sum, the Tatmadaw dedicates itself to democracy, while simultaneously underlining its importance in granting security and stability in the light of ongoing ethnic insurgencies. Hence, it argues for its own independence and inclusion in state institutions to carry out this duty. Consequently, the Tatmadaw's praetorian character is unbroken. However, it does not strive for absolute power anymore, making it a praetorian guardian. Yet it still portrays itself as the decisive force that is capable of securing political and economic progress. It is obvious that behind the scenes the Tatmadaw also uses these arguments to secure their revenues from resource extraction and protect its business conglomerates.

Concerning ethnic diversity in the country, the military emphasizes and glorifies unity within the Burmese groups as a foundation for peace and progress and propagates an image of historical harmony among resident ethnic groups. Issues involving Rohingya and Rakhine state were long ignored and omitted by the military. As the topic gained salience, the senior general openly said that Rohingya are not considered a part of Myanmar's national races. The anti-Rohingya narrative took a turn in 2017, as a reaction to previous events, as the Tatmadaw since then directly enriches it with suspected Muslim expansionism, terrorism and resulting anti-terror operations. Securitisation of the Rohingya issue has been reoccurring. Yet the character has recently switched from "illegal immigration" to "terrorism", which marks a new level and higher intensity military operations. In order to propagate this narrative the military increasingly referred to historic instances of Muslim secession movements. Especially social media platforms serve to propagate more radical depictions of "the Muslim threat".

Ironically, other ethnic armed groups in Myanmar often aspire independence or at least more autonomy. These groups however, are potential partners and signatories of the nationwide ceasefire agreement, while Muslim insurgents are portrayed as terrorists that cannot be negotiated with. Since the military's unbroken influence is anchored in the constitution, it is not bound to campaigning and attraction of voters. Therefore it didn't need to change its public stance before elections or when anti-Muslim players as 969, Ma Ba Tha and Arakan nationalist parties emerged. Its influence on politics and control over lucrative business is threatened by market reforms and the NLD's intentions to alter the constitution. To remain influential, the Tatmadaw consequently benefits from cultivating images of domestic enemies to the state, as

it allows them to justify extensive funding and political representation in most Burmese authorities as well as the upkeep of a strong force on Burmese soil.

The NLD finds itself in a position where it tries to adhere to modern and democratic values, but is hampered by powerful elites and a conservative Buddhist majority. To put it all into a pragmatic perspective, Aung San Suu Kyi is not free in her political choices. Although she championed human rights, she also is a Bamar Buddhist and nationalist, which does not give her much room to manoeuvre. As populism and the anti-Muslim narrative enjoys considerable support among the majority of Burmese, she has no other choice but to appeal to public opinion if she wants to secure support. Advocating human rights might have worked when she was the head of the opposition, but as de-facto head of state she has to sacrifice minority rights for public support and cooperation with the still powerful military.[425] But the public not only adheres to a xenophobic stance, it is also increasingly pessimistic about democratic and federal institutions and the economic development of the country, which even increases the NLD's need to secure support from the society's centre. [426] On top of satisfying the public, she also has to maintain a functioning relation with the Tatmadaw if she wants to advance with the peace process, secure the NLD's re-election and reform the country. Suu Kyi made the mistake to connect her strategy to constitutional amends that restrain the military's political dominance and physical presence in disputed areas. The Tatmadaw, reluctant to relinquish political power and income from exploiting natural resources as well as to commit to ethnic inclusion, has so far proven to be an obstacle to reconciliation and to plans to promote economic development in Rakhine State.[427] In this nexus, Suu Kyi failed to satisfy her high standards. Ongoing military operation against Shan and Kachin and a failure to address the Rohingya crisis caused widespread criticism which grimly notices the "bizarre prospect of a Nobel Prize winner presiding over a string of 'concentration camps' full of Rohingya refugees."[428] Apart from that, she has not achieved any constitutional change that limits the military's influence or creates mechanisms of accountability. The government-issued investigative commissions have until this day not pointed out any military misconduct in the 2016 and 2017 clearance operations.

---

[425] Perter A. Coclanis, "Aung San Suu Kyi Is a Politician, Not a Monster," Foreign Policy, https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/05/14/aung-san-suu-kyi-is-a-politician-not-a-monster/.
[426] "Myanmar's Stalled Transition.", 3-6.
[427] Zoltan Barany, "Burma: Suu Kyi's Missteps," *Journal of Democracy* 29, no. 1 (2018)., 9f, 14.
[428] Andrew Selth, "The Fallen Idol: Aung San Suu Kyi and the Politics of Personality," ABC Religion and Ethics, http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2017/09/12/4733319.htm.

Suu Kyi's position towards Rohingya has not changed significantly over time. Already as champion of the opposition and advocate of refugees, she did not speak out for the Rohingya. On the contrary, she consistently refuses to acknowledge the group's status as a distinct ethnic group. Even as an oppositional politician, she has relied on the narrative of illegal immigration as the root problem of Rakhine's societal and economic problems. At no point in time, she has used to term Rohingya. Her commitment to human rights has remained in her speeches, yet she has failed to put words into action by not establishing mechanisms for accountability within Myanmar or admitting human rights abuses. She furthermore adheres to the prevalent Burmese conception of ethnic nationalism. Suu Kyi unchangedly links citizen's rights to the recognised Burmese national races/ ethnic nationalities. It does accept that multiple ethnic groups constitute one Burmese nation, but the core of ethnic nationalism, ancestral ties to Burmese soil and shared heritage, remains. Burmanisation and efforts for a federal union continue simultaneously, suggesting that the "multi-ethnic nationalism" is envisaged to be dominated by majority Bamar group. What has changed is the way issues in Rakhine are framed. Just like the military Suu Kyi long named illegal immigration as the core of all problems. To add insult to injury, Suu Kyi and the government frequently deny ethnic cleansing, relativize Rohingya suffering by claiming rapes to be a "terrorist fabrication" accuse them of burning down their own settlements and emphasize Rakhine victims. Similar to the other state actors, securitisation of the Rohingya issue, as a matter of terrorism, has become a standard in the government's linguistic repertoire. Since ARSA attacked Burmese security forces in 2017, she increasingly refers to matters of terrorism and national security when commenting the events. In this matter, she sides with the Burmese military.

4.5 COMPARISON

How do the actors from the central government be implemented into the framework of symbolic politics? First, USDP, Tatmadaw and NLD fit the characteristics of symbolic politics to a great degree. All three actors operate in an environment where democratisation pushes them into competition for public favour while simultaneously providing political opportunity to mobilise unobstructedly. The political parties, in this context, are more bound by the popular vote and thus the Bamar-majority. The Tatmadaw, however, finds itself in a new situation. It can indeed refer back to reserved seats and political posts. Yet, as part of a civil government, it is nowadays more bound to create a positive public image than during the authoritarian rule. Thus, all actors readily reproduce the anti-Rohingya narrative in order bolster support and

appear as a guardian of Burmese Buddhists and national unity. Consolidation of power is their primary motive. It is indeed a realist goal, based on rational calculation, the realisation, however, is achieved through emotional appeals.

A central part of symbolic politics is that actors stir up hostile emotions towards the targeted group by referring to certain symbols. In this case, the symbols are those of Bengali immigrants and, more recently, Muslim terrorists. All levels of the central government strengthen the existing myth-symbol complex of Rohingya as parasitic Bengali immigrants through adherence to the concept of national races. This notion allows them to easily define Rohingya as alien elements to Myanmar and justify the rejection of citizen's rights to the Muslim group. I argue that all levels of the central government portray Muslims as an enemy to the Burmese to justify predatory policies. The political parties do so by framing the Rohingya issue as an obstacle for unity and development in the Union and thus indirectly a threat to all its members. As all of them pointed out disunity and lack of development are a major cause of the country's ongoing internal conflicts. All state-level actors have additionally denied the existence or legitimacy of the Rohingya ethnic group, which eventually translates into an aspired disenfranchisement of the group. This serves to satisfy nationalist demands and gain popularity, but also implies an aspired dominance over the group by being able to continue to make politics favouring Burmese Buddhist without being held by demands of the Muslim minority. These include a potential expulsion, land-grab and settlement of Buddhist model villages on Rohingya property.

Symbolic politics includes that actors exaggerate the threat from the out-group. The central government does so by not only framing Rohingya as illegal immigrants, but also through the recent linkage to terrorism. This narrative has so far been spread by all political and societal actors in Myanmar. The country has indeed worsened by 13 ranks in the Global Terrorism Index from 2017 to 2018 and sits now at rank 24, of the countries most affected by terrorism.[429] Without doubt, ARSA is the main reason for increasing the terrorist threat in the country. However, their operations have firstly come to a halt after 2017 and secondly overshadowed by Myanmar's ongoing internal warfare and vast number of internally displaced people, which, if unaddressed, pose a more serious threat to the country's development. To put it into perspective; the 142 terror-related deaths, attributed to ARSA[430], are surpassed greatly by more than 1300 deaths caused by re-emergence of fighting between the Tatmadaw and KIO

---

[429] "Global Terrorism Index 2018: Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism," (Sydney2018)., 8.
[430] Ibid., 52.

in 2011[431] and more than 100.000 resulting refugees.[432] Even the 2012 communal violence in Rakhine, causing 192 victims,[433] surpasses the ARSA's operation in terms of death toll. In the light of Myanmar's ongoing conflicts, it is indefensible to claim that Muslim terrorism poses a severe threat. Using (counter-) terrorism as a false pretence is becoming a popular strategy in Myanmar. Nevertheless, the contradictions demonstrate the opportunism of the Burmese government, as many other armed groups with similar tactics to ARSA have not been declared terrorist organisations.

However, some variation between the actors can be observed. The USDP, for example, sided with chauvinist Rakhine actors and implemented discriminators policies as the removal of voting rights and "race of religion laws". This action firstly confirms that political competition is a driver in the hostilities towards Rohingya, as these measures were implemented shortly before the 2015 election. It furthermore demonstrates that, as described by symbolic politics, populist policies will become popular and that they aim to achieve dominance over the other. Through removal of voting rights and limiting of religious freedom, reproduction and marriage of Muslims, the USDP was on the forefront of securing the disenfranchisement (and in turn domination over) Rohingya. Thein Sein, on top of that, suggested ethnic separation and enforcement of the citizenship verification, or in other words relocation of Rohingya, which technically is not aimed towards domination or self-protection, but has the same outcome – the reign over the homeland, uncontested by the out-group.

The Tatmadaw has more than other actors from the central government referred to historic instances of Muslim separatism. Additionally the military frequently invokes and glorifies sentiments of historic unity between Myanmar's ethnic groups, which allegedly caused a golden age of peace and prosperity. This enforces the sentiments of a historic rivalry with Muslims and thus confirms the assumption of symbolic politics, that actors glorify the past and portray a struggle for group worth and supremacy, that has its roots in the past. When mentioning past events, the military furthermore seldom omits to point out its (self-ascribed) ability to restore the unity within Myanmar and ward off external and internal threats, in order to justify the preservation of its influence and independence. Linking the military to the security of the country, is in fact a veil to cover up greedy interest like securing revenues from resource extraction and military enterprises and the related preservation of power. Conveniently, it also

---

[431] Uppsala Conflict Data Program, "Government of Myanmar (Burma) - Kio," Department of Peace and Conflict Research, https://ucdp.uu.se/#/statebased/461.

[432] Helen Regan, "'What Future Do We Have?' Caught in the Crossfire of Myanmar's Northern Conflict, Civilians See Little Hope," Time Magazine.

[433] "Final Report of Inquiry Commission on Sectarian Violence in Rakhine State.", 20.

allows the Tatmadaw to present itself as the protector of Buddhism, which benefits its public perception. Hence, the assumption that elites claim to be driven by security motives, but are actually driven by rational calculations of maximizing benefits is confirmed. Symbolic politics assumes that the appeals to emotion will eventually cause predatory policies to become popular. The military cleansing in Rakhine is no exception to this. It might not exactly fit into the definition of policy, but, like previous discriminatory policies by the USDP government, it has not received substantial criticism from within Myanmar.

Compared to other political actors, NLD-members and Suu Kyi did less frequently refer to an alleged Muslim threat or invasion. They can therefore not directly be related to the perpetuation of xenophobia or accused of inciting religious hatred. Suu Kyi instead appeals to positive sentiments of cooperation and unity. The party is furthermore less influenced by by direct lobbying by religious actors. It is, however, in a situation where it has to appeal to multiple domestic and international actors. In this situation they opt for the most rational choice that ensures their prospects to be re-elected; satisfying the Burmese Bamar-majority and avoiding to alienate the military. Consequently, criticism on the Tatmadaws conduct has been strictly avoided. The international community, an important factor for investment and development, is secondary and assuaged with half-hearted promises and actions.

Comparted to previous state discrimination and communal violence, the situation of Rohingya escalated during the NLD term. From previous communal violence, it turned into insurgency against a state organ and eventually into systematic displacement. According to the findings of previous research, does discrimination and power imbalance facilitate grievances and cause ethnic insurgency. This is confirmed by the emergence of the ARSA, which formed and gained prominence after the political disenfrenchisement (removal of voting rights) and discrimination ("race and religion laws") at the end of the USDP tenure. Media reach and freedom are very likely to affect islamophobia among the Burmese Buddhists. Yet, ARSA used social media to mobilise aswell, which confirms that structural changes during democracy, such as marketisation and unrestricted internet, facilitate mobilisation along ethnic lines.

The NLD cannot be blamed for predatory behaviour of other actors. The emergence of the NLD and Aung San Suu Kyi as strong political actors definitely dragged other actors like military and USDP into a competitive situation where they did not find many ways to gain upper hand. Consequently, they exploited ethnic tensions to gain support. NLD and Suu Kyi stand out due to extreme passiveness. Therefore, the democratic party is not free of guilt. Despite a commitment to human rights, it failed to provide solution for the citizenship problem

and discrimination of Rohingya and eventually allowed a genocidal campaign to happen without any serious repercussions.

However, one piece of the puzzle is missing. The state actors are all more or less bandwagoning on the anti-Muslim narrative, but they are not the source of it. Yet, this is another essential characteristic of symbolic politics. The mythology and narrative have to be present before political actors can exploit it. In the case of Myanmar, I attribute this role to the forces that van Klinken and Su Mon Thazin Aung labelled as "social brokers". The ones that successfully connect societal actors and their concerns to the political realm and effectively facilitate collective action.

CHAPTER V: ANALYSIS OF THE LOCAL LEVEL

It is reasonable to assume that the anti-Rohingya narrative is created locally, where the Muslim community gets in contact with Buddhist groups. This is indeed the case in Rakhine state. Shortly after the country's elections and first incidents of communal violence, political parties and religious groups in this area spearheaded a movement of cheap propaganda. The following chapter will analyse their relation to state and society, attitudes toward Rohingya and how these turned into successful lobbying.

5.1 RAKHINE PARTIES

Rakhine parties are a product of political competition on state level and ethnic contentions in Rakhine State. They shaped their image as ethnic parties, advocating the concerns of ethnic Rakhine people. As part of this, they substantially utilised anti-Muslim sentiments and confronted or lobbied the central government. Ideologically they overlap with nationalist Buddhists, leading to a successful linkage and alliance of the two actors. The ANP furthermore established itself as the third strongest party in the national parliaments.

During the first Arakan National Party Conference, the party's leadership emphasised the need for genuine federalism and unity of Rakhine people to face illegal immigration and control through the central state.[434] The ANP does not hide its disapproval of the political course of the central government. Regarding the latest violence in Rakhine, the party accuses the incumbent government to neglect the local Rakhine population and to internationalise the issue.[435] However, the party only saw its position towards the central government strengthened by the growing attention to local politics and human rights abuses. Because the central government had no other option but siding with Burmese Buddhists and approved ethnic nationalities, it had to cooperate with the Rakhine nationalists against the alleged immigrant Muslims. Since the first election, the Rakhine nationalists' leverage increased continuously as they deepened their linkage to Buddhists as well as local Rakhine and achieved their widespread mobilisation. Typically, cooperation between parties and civil society organisations (CSOs) in

---

[434] "Opening Ceremony of First Arakan National Party Conference Held 25.10.2014 " news release, 2014, https://www.facebook.com/792021817520982/posts/press-releaseopening-ceremony-of-first-arakan-national-party-conference-held2510/795445623845268/.

[435] Moe Myint, "Anp's Criticism of Government in Peace Conference Speech Sparks Controversy," The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/anps-criticism-government-peace-conference-speech-sparks-controversy.html.

Myanmar is extremely low, as both sides have not figured out how they could establish a beneficial relationship, despite having similar goals.[436] The Rakhine parties however proved to be more concerned to cooperate with local civil society organisations to address societal issues. ANP and CSOs have successfully cooperated in setting up workshops on natural resource protection, drafting a fishery law and exchanging opinions on a fair redistribution of wealth from resource extraction. They furthermore are responsible for introducing conferences that intend to connect people from all social classes of Rakhine's society.[437] As the party worked its way up to the third-largest force in the national parliament and the strongest political force in Arakan, it managed to urge various concessions of by the central government.

5.1.1 THE PARTIES' EARLY ATTITUDE

In early stage, an essential part of the local politicians' campaigning revolved around protection of the ethnic Rakhine people. Fears of supersession and thinning to nonexistence were already visible before the anti-Muslim sentiments emerged. In the first democratic tenure, Rakhine politicians argued that the desolate economic conditions and continuous exploitation of Rakhine's resources in combination with monopolisation and privatisation of land and water, caused local Rakhine people to abolish their home and try to make a living elsewhere. U Hla Saw, General Secretary of the RNDP considered these conditions as a "problem that may gradually lead to the cessation of a national race."[438] However, a possible supersession through Muslims or Bengalis is not mentioned in this context. This fear became more salient in the later statements of the leaders of the RNDP and ANP as well as the ALD, Aye Maung and Aye Thar Maung.

Dr. Aye Maung was one of the leading figures in Rakhine's local politics. He served as the president of both, the RNDP and the ANP. In 2012 Maung underlined the need mobilize "Arakanese people and our ethnic brothers with their kind hearts"[439] in order to secure the control over Rakhine's resources which are "swept away and just used for the benefit and development of another region in the similar manner of exploitation as in the colonial era."[440] In this statement, made prior to incidents of sectarian violence in Rakhine, Maung solely names

---

[436] Susanne Kempel, Chan Myawe Aung Sun, and Aung Tun, "Myanmar Political Parties at a Time of Transition," (Yangon: Pyoe Pin Programme, 2015)., 21.

[437] Ibid., 51.

[438] U Hla Saw, interview by Narinjara News Agency, 2011.

[439] Narinjara News, "Colonial Era Exploitation Should Be Avoided: Dr. Aye Maung," Narinjara, http://narinjara.com/colonial-era-exploitation-should-be-avoided-dr-aye-maung/.

[440] Ibid.

the exploitation of resources through the central government and negligence to care for regional development as problems. Immigration or Muslims are not mentioned. This point of view clearly shows his agenda of ensure Rakhine people's self-administration over their territory. It furthermore includes the notion of brotherhood between ethnic groups in Myanmar, referring back to a primordial relationship between the ethnic groups and glorifying a mythological and primordial relation that serves to unify the "us" against them. This serves two purposes: to unite affected ethnic group to form a coalition against a threat and to secure support among this group.[441] These statements were made prior to incidents of sectarian violence in Rakhine state. Since Maung voiced no Muslim, Rohingya or immigrant threat at this point, it can be inferred that this narrative only became popular after violent clashes and the subsequent ethnic interpretation of the events had occurred. However, Maung and other politicians would later prominently propagate the alleged Muslim threat to Rakhine and Myanmar.

5.1.2 SUCCESSFUL LINKAGE BETWEEN 2012 AND 2014 – IDENTIFYING ROHINGYA AS A THREAT

Affected by the rising xenophobia, spurred by nationalist monks and the 969 movement, and instances of sectarian violence, Rakhine parties began linking societal actors and political through conferences and by encouraging public protest. A conference of various actors in 2012 allowed the people of Rakhine to voice their opinion on the most pressing issues. The public meeting, that collected the opinion of around 2000 people of Rakhine State, including representatives of 17 townships and delegates from political and social organisations, later published the results as a public statement. It clearly shows that containment of Muslims was the new key concern of Rakhine people as 15 out of 24 points in the statement aim directly disenfranchising or relocating Rohingya. Even the remaining points concerning economic development explicitly favour Arakanese people. The list of resolutions involves the enforcement of the 1982 citizenship law, the implementation of a law controlling the birth rate of the "Muslim Bengali Community"[442], the removal of "Bengali villages located near Sittwe University"[443] and the return of lands lost in the 1942 communal riots. It furthermore rejects the use of the term Rohingya and the participation of "Bengali representatives in the parliament

---

[441] Pichayada Promchertchoo, "Distrust and Suspicion Deepen in Myanmar's Rakhine State Amid Violence," Channel News Asia.

[442] Narinjara News, "Arakan Public Meeting Successfully Concludes in Rathidaung," Narinjara, http://narinjara.com/arakan-public-meeting-successfully-concludes-in-rahindaung/.

[443]Ibid.

who illegally regain national ID cards."[444] To empower the Rakhine ethnic groups, it demands a strengthening of security forces to prevent illegal immigration, to form and equip sophisticated militias in border regions and a redistribution of resource revenue to Rakhine people. The demands include the implementation of "what President U Thein Sein told chief [sic!] of UNHCR on 11 July 2012"[445], which is the deportation of Rohingya to a different country.[446] Remarkably, the outcome of the meeting is not the campaign rhetoric of politicians, but the collective demands of Rakhine people. Still a great convergence with opinions from Ma Ba Tha, the 969-movement and nationalist politicians can be observed. Seemingly, their agenda has a major impact on the public discourse. In turn, politicians with a nationalist agenda used these conferences to proliferate themselves and secure support and legitimacy.

A second, similar conference was held in 2014. It surpassed the previous one in terms of size and once more featured not only politicians, but also monks and community organisers. The conference only reinforced already existing demands, yet it was an important platform for linking civil actors and politicians.[447] Rakhine elites established the Rakhine Social Network (RSN) and the Emergency Coordination Committee (EEC) to oversee the work of INGOs in Rakhine. The former is an umbrella movement of more than 40 organisations of civil society, which share the same protectionist goals as the ANP. The latter comprises representatives of Rakhine's civil society and regional and national government. What makes them stand out is the involvement of Rakhine parties and civil actors. The EEC has the power to halt the operations of UN agencies and INGOs and the RSN was even founded after a proposal passed by the Rakhine state parliament. [448] Thus, conferences went beyond publishing joint declarations and resulted into formidably influential organisations. Hence, it can be confirmed that brokerage, by local politicians that efficiently connected with religious and civil actors, took place in Rakhine State. In the end, presenting the results of the conference as an expression of interests of the local population was a major benefit for the parties' legitimacy, because it showed the convergence of public interest and the parties' nationalistic course. As a widely

---

[444]Ibid.

[445] Ibid.

[446] Saw Yan Naing, "Unhcr Rejects Rohingya Resettlement Suggestion," The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/unhcr-rejects-rohingya-resettlement-suggestion.html.

[447] Hussain, "Federalism, Freedom and Fear-Mongering: Democratization and Violent Conflict in Rakhine State, Myanmar.", 38-39.

[448] Aubrey Belford, "As Myanmar's Rakhine Buddhists Gain Strength, So Does Anti-Muslim Apartheid," Reuters.; Wa Lone, "Rakhine Civil Society Forms Groups to Monitor Ingo Activities," The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/10513-rakhine-civil-society-forms-groups-to-monitor-ingo-activities.html.

accepted champion of local interests, Rakhine parties could build on their popularity to submit their demands to the central government.

Rakhine leaders later successfully lobbied the former president to implement these demands. Leaked documents attest that Rakhine politicians submitted their demands of population control, restriction of movement and stripping of voting rights for Rohingya directly to the president. Many of their demands, such as restrictions on reproduction and removal of voting rights were later implemented.[449] However, if it is due to the pressure of Rakhine politicians or due to the influence of extremists Buddhists and popular mobilisation cannot be determined with certainty. Since both acted as close allies, it is most likely that Buddhists as well as Rakhine politicians had a crucial role; Buddhists as a linkage to the public and politicians as an agent able to forward demands through official political channels.

5.1.3 The parties' attack on Rohingya past 2012

After Rakhine had been shaken by violence between Muslims and Buddhists, party leaders implemented a Muslim threat into their narrative of Rakhine as a territory under siege. One example for this was Aye Tha Aung. The former chairman of the ALD and now speaker of the upper house of Myanmar's bicameral legislature is considered more moderate. Yet, after the communal violence in 2012 and 2013, he similarly called Rakhine as "under threat of invasion", argues in support of the enforcement of the citizenship law and denies Rohingya the right to vote.[450] His classification of Rohingya as foreigners is based on a crude observation. He remarked, "We always know them as Bengalis. They speak Bengali language. So we will continue to call them Bengali."[451] He therefore locates the tension in Rakhine state as linked to illegal immigration and objects the use of the term Rohingya as it "will create more opportunities for them to attain citizenship and it's like accepting they are Myanmar nationals."[452] Thus, he evokes sentiments of existential threat through Bengali invaders that has to be stopped through a legal framework.

When commenting on issues in Rakhine, the term "Bengali" is used unitarily by leading members of the Rakhine nationalist parties and officials, such as the previously mentioned Aye

---

[449] MacManus, Green, and de la Cour Venning, *Countdown to Annihilation: Genocide in Myanmar*., 34-35.

[450] Belford, "As Myanmar's Rakhine Buddhists Gain Strength, So Does Anti-Muslim Apartheid".

[451] Ye Mon, "Nationalist Party Opposes Official Term for Muslim Community in Rakhine," The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/20997-nationalist-party-opposes-official-term-for-muslim-community-in-rakhine.html.

[452] Ibid.

Maung, Kaung San Ree (editor of the Rakhine State News Journal),[453], Kyaw Zaw Oo[454] (former ANP Secretary) or Rakhine State Attorney General Hla Thein.[455] Thus, the political leadership insists on framing the issue as Bengali immigration or terrorism, but only after violent clashes had occurred and were embedded into the propaganda of chauvinist monks.

During political campaigning for the 2015 election the ANP completely relied on its role as a protector of Rakhine people, be it in lamenting exploitation by the central government, the demands for a federal union, the expansion of local armed militia or the alleged Muslim threat. Only a small margin separated the ANP from becoming the dominating party in Rakhine. Consequently, the party continued with its appeal to nationalist sentiments and its self-portrayal as champion of Rakhine people, while aiming to disenfranchise Rohingya voters. The ANP ran the 2015 election campaign using the slogan "Love your nationality, keep pure blood, be Rakhine and vote ANP."[456] The catchphrase directly appeals to primordial motives of racial purity and the concerns of dilution of an ethnic group through cross-ethnic contacts or marriage. With the approaching election, Aye Ne Sein, vice-chairwoman of the Party articulated the party's attitude towards Rohingya. "We don't accept the term 'stateless' being used by the international community. They came from Bangladesh, they have the same religion, race, perception and traditions as people in Bangladesh", she proclaimed. Not only do these statements show a rejection of Rohingya as Burmese citizens and a general categorisation of the ethnicity based on visible features, they also refer to a primordial perception of nationality – a nationality that is defined by blood, race, religion and language instead of the modern idea of nationality through self-identification with a state. By reducing the problem of interethnic violence in the region to a primordial survival of a race, politics in Rakhine once again exploited cleavages and directly worked towards Rohingya alienation.

Lamenting illegal immigration, especially the influx of Bengalis, a negative influence on rule of law and security in the country, ANP members attacked the Burmese government for abuse of power and failure to regulate immigration and wrongly granting citizenship to Muslims in July 2016.[457] In sessions of the Lower House of Parliament, the ANP called for a better

---

[453] "Rakhine Sectarian Violence - One Year On," *IRIN Asia Service*, 06/13/
2013 Jun 13 2013.
[454] Kayleigh Long, "In Sittwe, an Independent Candidate in Name Only Tells of a Split within His Party," The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/17332-in-sittwe-an-independent-candidate-in-name-only-tells-of-a-split-within-his-party.html.
[455] "Myanmar Ends State of Emergency in Western Rakhine State," (Washington: Federal Information & News Dispatch, Inc., 2016).
[456] Mclaughlin, "Rising Rakhine Party Looming Threat to Myanmar's Muslim Minority".
[457] Moe Myint, "Anp Alleges Govt 'Wrongly' Issued Citizenship in Arakan State," The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/anp-alleges-govt-wrongly-issued-citizenship-in-arakan-state.html.

enforcement of the 1982 Citizenship Law. The demands were a reaction to the citizenship verification process, which was initiated by the Thein Sein government. Originally, this plan determined that Rohingya could apply for Burmese citizenship, with limited rights, if they identify as "Bengali". The ANP however proved not satisfied with this solution. According to their perception, the citizenship should be determined by the 1982 Citizenship law, with special regards to the articles that lay down a need to present evidence that applicants, their parents or grandparents entered Burma before 1948 – documents that few Rohingya possess, even if the lived in Myanmar for generations. The party proposed to rigorously enforce the law and expel illegals, once the citizenship verification process is launched. The status quo of right to stay for alleged illegal immigrants should not be tolerated.[458] The ANP's position is once again congruent with the one of Rakhine Buddhists, who also voiced their opposition to the verification-process. In this effort, the party proved even more disapprobative of Rohingya Muslims than the central government by boycotting a (legit yet discriminatory) process that would provide limited rights to a handful of Rohingya. Additionally, this event shows that the party had enough political influence to take their agenda to the national parliaments and spark a debate.

After a Burmese representative suggested to the Human Rights Council in 2016 that officials should use the term "Muslim community in Rakhine State", instead of Bengali or Rohingya. The ANP strongly objected this proposal.[459] The ANP's statement interprets the change of terms as discrimination and a threat to the sovereignty of Rakhine Buddhists. According to the statement, this process "is aimed at trying to hide the truth about the native place of the Bengalis. It is also intend [sic!] to mislead the people into believing that the Rakhine region is the Bengalis' native place."[460] This in turn, would object the Burmese laws banning abuse of religion for political purpose and promotion of hatred between ethnic or religious communities.

According to this law the use of the term "Bengali" should be banned, since it clearly ascribes religion, ethnicity and origin for the purpose of political proliferation and the promotion of animosity. Hence, the position of the ANP is contradictory. Their interest however is to prevent Rohingya from gaining legitimacy. The ANP furthermore deployed rhetoric of

---

[458] Su Myat Mon, "Push for Citizenship Verification Brings Contentious Law into Focus," The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/push-for-citizenship-verification-brings-contentious-law-into-focus.html.

[459] The quoted article uses the abbreviation RNP for Rakhine National Party. Since no party of that name is registered in Myanmar, I assume that the article refers to the ANP.

[460] Eleven Media Group, "Rnp Issues Statement on Use of 'Muslim Community in Rakhine State'," Eleven Media Group, http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/local/5225.

victimisation and stated "Rakhine people feel that the Bengali issue discriminates against ethnic Rakhine people."[461] Portraying Arakanese as the community under pressure the ANP intends to continue to use the term "Bengali" in order "not to lose any sovereignty in Rakhine State."[462]

The objection of using a more neutral term (Muslim Community in Rakhine State), ignoring ethnic or geographical origin, clearly demonstrates how Rakhine nationalists politicise simple matters and put them into a context of discrimination against Rakhine, in order consolidate support by their ethnic support base. Highly emotionalised topics as the control over the own (inherited) territory repeatedly occur in order to create the impression of urgency and necessity of drastic measures. In this process the facts and intentions are twisted. A proposal that could lead to more equality between ethnic groups through possible recognition and participation of Rohingya, (under the name of Burmese Muslims) is turned into an issue of discrimination against Rakhine people. On top of that, a continuous attempt to undermine the existence of the Rohingya as a legitimate ethnic group or of a Muslim community native to Myanmar can be observed.

5.1.4 REACTIONS TO THE 2017 VIOLENCE

Public perception of Rohingya did not significantly change after the attack by ARSA in 2017. Yet, the notion of terrorism and an intention to establish a Muslim caliphate became more prominent and were embedded in citizen's observations. Local Rakhine report that they noticed preparations for a jihad, during which Rohingya villages were abandoned prior to the attacks. Kaung San Rhee, chairman of the Myanmar Journalists Association in Rakhine State and editor-in-chief of the Rakhine Hluttaw Journal, voiced suspicion towards the whole Rohingya community. He said, "Bengalis fled because they're afraid of being prosecuted for what they did. They committed crimes and fled to Bangladesh because they have the terrorists' protection."[463] San Kyaw Hla, who proclaimed, "They want to make sure local Rakhine people dare not live here", shares his view. "If we're scared and run away only Muslims will remain. They did it because they want to establish an Islamic state."[464] San Kyaw Hla's statement contains various aspects, characteristic for inflammatory speech through predatory politicians. On the one hand, it shows a clear labelling of "us" and "them", creating a cohesion within the

---

[461] Ibid.
[462] Ibid.
[463] Promchertchoo, "Distrust and Suspicion Deepen in Myanmar's Rakhine State Amid Violence".
[464] Ibid.

- 127 -

groups that do not identify as Rohingya. On the other hand, it attributes a malicious intend to the "others" which threatens the own group's existence. He furthermore accuses Rohingya as a whole as being involved in terrorism and even blames the victims of violence of being guilty.

The local governments do not consider any guilt of local politics or the military. When confronted with accusations of forced eviction and insufficient repatriation, Rakhine elites state to carry out the will of the people. U San Kyaw Hla , speaker of the Rakhine State parliament described the Rakhine State Hluttaw as "in line with the local residents on the terrorism event in Rakhine".[465] From his perspective, central government and local authorities are siding with the local residents to promote reconstruction and development "without affiliation to any party or person"[466]. This is contradicted by reports of demolition of Rohingya villages,[467] land grab,[468] failure to address the citizenship status of Rohingya[469] as well as to credibly communicate safe return and freedom of future persecution and discrimination to Rohingya.[470] Combined, the statements of officials and the absence of serious repatriation-efforts, demonstrate that the Rakhine party's attention solely lays with the ethnic Rakhine people. "Without party affiliation" in this context unaltered implies the exclusion of Rohingya.

The most influential party in Rakhine State stays adamant in its position that Rohingya Muslims are illegal immigrants and not a legitimate part of Rakhine's society. In a presentation of the ANP's party programmes in 2017, Aye Maung stressed the role of the party's ideal to promote "the interests of all Rakhine nationalities and other nationalities living in Rakhine State."[471] Unsurprisingly, Rohingya are not included in this plan. The matter is framed as "Bengali affairs"[472] that require a strong and independent Rakhine State in order to resist pressures from outside forces like "Bengali immigration" and the biased central government. According to Aye Maung, equality, unity and self-determination would be the key to end internal conflict and plight of Burmese minorities. In reference to the 21st Century Panglong

---

[465] "Rakhine State Hluttaw in Line with Local Populace: Rakhine State Hluttaw Speaker," news release, http://www.president-office.gov.mm/en/?q=issues/rakhine-state-affairs/id-8083.
[466] Ibid.
[467] Thiri Min Zin, "Myanmar Officials Respond to Rights Group's Report on Bulldozed Rohingya Villages," Radio Free Asia, Myanmar Service, https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/myanmar-officials-respond-to-rights-groups-report-on-bulldozed-rohingya-villages-02232018163028.html.
[468] Amnesty International, "Myanmar: Military Land Grab as Security Forces Build Bases on Torched Rohingya Villages " Amnesty International, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/03/myanmar-military-land-grab-as-security-forces-build-bases-on-torched-rohingya-villages/.
[469] "Rohingya Repatriation Survey," ed. Xchange Foundation (Malta: Xchange Foundation, 2018)., 10.
[470] Ibid., 35-36.
[471] Aye Maung, "Arakan National Party Presents Policy and Programmes," Global New Light of Myanmar, http://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/arakan-national-party-presents-policy-and-programmes/.
[472] Ibid.

Conference, he calls for rights of states to manage international and domestic investments, revenues, resource exploitation and security forces under a framework of a federal union. To determine a head of state for the federal union, he proposes an "alternative system […] based on ethnicity."[473] Demands of unity among national ethnicities, more sovereignty and control are all too familiar. All new is the idea of an ethnicity-based presidential system, which clearly aims at empowerment of the national races. However, these demands are not elaborated, indicating that this is just the usual oratory to gather ethnic Rakhine around the flag. It is furthermore out of question that Rohingya Muslims will be allowed to field a presidential candidate due to their status as alleged immigrants

5.1.5 RUN UP FOR THE 2018 BY-ELECTION

Aye Maung was arrested in January 2018, after a violent police crackdown of protests by Rakhine people in Mrauk U. Prior to the incident Maung had given a speech on the anniversary of the fall of the Arakan Kingdom and the following invasion of Burmese forces. Allegedly, he proclaimed that the Bamar majority considered Rakhine people as slaves and did not grant them equal rights. He later appealed to greater sovereignty among the Rakhine community and proposed the need for armed struggle, hinting support for the Arakan Army insurgent group.[474]

The ANP presented its latest policy stance in preparation for the 2018 by-election in Rakhine State. The programme does not differ significantly from the previous course. Yet it further uses the concept of an ethnicity-based local government. The ANP still considers itself as the representative of approved Rakhine ethnic nationals. In this position, it calls for the redistribution of profits from international investment and resource exploitation in favour of Rakhine nationals as well as the realisation of the right of self-determination through a federal union. ANP Vice Chairperson Daw Aye Nu Sein's describes a political programme based on the concept of "nationalities-based states."[475] This approach conveniently enables the party to demand greater autonomy for Rakhine State. But the Rohingya demands for citizenship status, which also trace back to approval as ethnic nationality, are easily waved aside by denying the status of an ethnic group or nation through declaring them Bengali immigrants. The narrative

---

[473] Ibid.

[474] Nyan Hlaing Lynn, "Rakhine Political Leader Dr Aye Maung Arrested in Sittwe after Mrauk U Violence," Frontier Myanmar, https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/rakhine-political-leader-dr-aye-maung-arrested-in-sittwe-after-mrauk-u-violence.

[475] The Global New Light of Myanmar, "Arakan National Party Presents Policy, Stance and Work Program".

of terrorist attacks that "have been threatening the safety of lives of Rakhine people"[476] is still maintained. The threat is portrayed as not eradicated. U Myint Khine, administrator of Maungdaw township, for example, denied a genocide in Myanmar and suspected that "Muslims will kill ethnic people when they get the chance."[477] Despite allegations of terrorism, matters regarding Rohingya are unalteredly framed as a "Bengali issue" and a challenge to the sovereignty of the state. In the light of increased attention of western state and activity by human rights organisations, the party once more voiced that influence of foreign power discriminates against the will of Rakhine people, and eventually threatens democracy in Myanmar.[478] Approaching the by-election, the ANP continues its course of distinct Rakhine nationalism that empowers Rakhine ethnics but excludes Rohingya. Local politicians uphold the narrative of a predatory Islam, even after the Rohingya are politically powerless, dispersed or trapped in IDP camps and ARSA has mostly ceased operations.

5.1.6 TIES TO THE TATMADAW

The Commander-in-Chief of Defence service met up with Aye Maung and other parliamentarians to discuss security issues in northern Rakhine in the beginning of August 2017, after a lethal attack on two Rakhine men had occurred. In an interview on the purpose of the meeting, Aye Maung stated, "The main reason is that we (our people) are being murdered by terrorists."[479] He suggested, "If we do not take immediate action, there will be further killings. We need to prevent (sic!) before our ethnics are harmed."[480] Maung presumes that "if ethnics leave their villages, the territory existence (sic!) will become vulnerable. This is kind of a sovereignty failure."[481] Maung suggested the resumption of military operations in the state, an armament of villagers for self-defence and the construction of fences.[482] He portrayed a territorial conflict in which Rakhine people "cannot lose one ethnic village."[483] His argumentation repeated patterns of "us against them" in an existential fight as well as the frames

[476] Ibid.

[477] Rebecca Wright, Matt Rivers, and Mark Phillips, "Return to Rakhine: 'Genocide Never Happened in This Country'," *CNN Wire Service*, 10/18/
2018 Oct 18 2018.

[478] U Myint Naing, "Arakan National Party Paper Read at 2018 International Day of Democracy Ceremony," Global Light Of Myanmar, http://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/arakan-national-party-paper-read-at-2018-international-day-of-democracy-ceremony/.

[479] Aye Maung, interview by Hsan Moe Tun, 2017.

[480] Ibid.

[481] Ibid.

[482] Ibid.

[483] Ibid.

of the conflict as a matter of terrorism. Essentially, this is an extreme form of securitisation, where threats are exaggerated as existence threatening. In reality, terrorism poses no existential threat to Rakhine people. Crippled economy and lack of opportunities in fact, might be a more significant cause for migration by Rakhine people. However, fearmongering serves the purpose of uniting Rakhine people and securing their support. Beyond the siege mentality of Rakhine people, this event also shows that Rakhine politicians have a functioning connection with high military personnel and the military as a strategic ally. The autonomy of the military allowed Aye Maung and Min Aung Hlaing to bypass the central government and directly engage in a dialogue.

Evidence gathered from interviews indicates that the military indeed fulfilled Rakhine ethnic demands and significantly worked towards a disempowerment of Rohingya and strengthening of local other communities and security bodies. Weeks and months prior to the August 2017 attacks, Burmese soldiers deprived Rohingya of sharp and blunt objects, including household or farming items. Upon order, fences around Rohingya houses were removed to facilitate an easy observation of civilians around their homes. Maung's request of armed militias was also fulfilled. In the months prior to the ARSA attacks, the military provided training and weapons to local militias. In some cases were weapons distributed to militias on the day of the fatal counterattack on Rohingya.[484] Bangladeshi military intelligence reported a significant and unusual increase in military activity in northern Rakhine in the weeks before August 25th.[485] The Burmese army dispatched an additional 500 soldiers to towns near the Border with Bangladesh just two days after the meeting of Hlaing and Maung,[486] demonstrating the successful lobbying effort on behalf of the ANP's chairman.

5.1.7 SUCCESSFUL LOBBYING

The party's success in connecting with the local population and Buddhist elites translates into the ability to exert political influence. The ANP successfully lobbied for Rakhine interests vis-à-vis the central government on multiple occasions. Although a federal union or greater control over local resources has not been achieved, the RNDP and ANP effectively worked for the disenfranchisement of Rohingya in order to maximise their influence in state

---

[484] Smith et al., "They Gave Them Long Swords: Preparations for Genocide and Crimes against Humanity against Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine State, Myanmar.", 41-46
[485] Ibid., 49-50.
[486] Wa Lone, "Myanmar Sends Hundreds of Troops to Rakhine as Tension Rises: Sources," Reuters.

parliament. Interethnic violence in Rakhine only benefitted local politicians as it spurred the perception of a Muslim threat, which drove voters into the arms of the ethnic Rakhine parties, who declared themselves as saviours of the Rakhine people.

In the 2010 election, the USDP courted Rohingya in order to secure their vital votes. Holders of temporary resident cards were granted suffrage. The USDP expected that Rohingya would not give their vote to nationalist Rakhine politicians, effectively benefitting the USPD's cause. Consequently, the local population, perceiving Rohingya as illegal immigrants, felt mistreated and the RNDP and ANP gained foothold as exclusive representatives of Rakhine ethnic groups. Disenfranchising Rohingya soon became a vital part of the RNDP's and ANP's strategy. In cooperation with extremist monks, Rakhine politicians worked towards the exclusion of Rohingya from society, which soon became reality. As violent clashes increased past 2010, the central government implemented "conflict prevention measures", effectively separating Rohingya and Rakhine in Sittwe and banning those with a destroyed house to IDP camps.[487] Additionally, the ANP and the newly founded Rakhine Social Network (RSN) successfully mobilized the population to protest international aid organisations, which they accused of an aid bias in favour of Rohingya. After protest, attacks on offices of UN and other organisations as well as threats against locals who cooperate with international aid organisations, Médecins Sans Frontières was expelled in 2014 and the government instituted a strict monitoring of other organisations.[488] Successful mobilisation and widespread protest were a crucial factor in evoking this reaction from the central government. However, the strategy of Rakhine nationalists additionally included a political disenfranchisement of Rohingya.

In the 2014 census, the government gave in to popular protest and limited the self-identification for Rohingya to "Bengali" as the only option, despite previous assurances that free choice of ethnicity will be granted.[489] On top of that did the central government revoke voting rights of holders of temporary resident cards, which were mostly Rohingya. This decision was made shortly after Rakhine parliamentarians notified Myanmar's Constitutional Tribunal that the constitution does not grant suffrage to TRC holders, which was confirmed by the tribunal. In this case, Rakhine politics did not act on its own. Religious actors, such as Ma Ba Tha, were crucially involved in lobbying and mobilisation. The disenfranchisement of Rohingya was only in the best interest of the ANP, since it eliminated over half a million voters,

---

[487] Hussain, "Federalism, Freedom and Fear-Mongering: Democratization and Violent Conflict in Rakhine State, Myanmar.", 32-33.

[488] Ibid., 37.

[489] Ibid., 37.

who would have given their vote to anyone but a nationalist Rakhine party.[490] A most welcomed development, since the ANP only needed to win six more representatives to become the dominant force in the states parliament.[491]

The success in lobbying the central government for interest of Rakhine people can be traced back to the broad support the party enjoys in the region, which allowed it to successfully mobilize the local population on multiple occasions and thus forcing a reaction by the central government. Two factors immensely benefitted the RNDPs and ANPs popularity. On the one hand, the successful linkage of politics, civil society and monks, and on the other hand, the emergence of violent clashes, which confirmed the nationalists' narrative of an invasive Islam.[492] Both are mutually reinforcing. Religious elites saw their moral influence and worldly power decline during democratisation in favour of civil organisations, which created the incentives to cooperate with local politicians.[493] As politicians as well as monks had a common stance on the "Bengali issue", a linkage of these two powerful occurred almost naturally. Increased popularity of politicians and monks the platform to spread their narrative, increasing the perception of a Muslim threat. As the nationalist narrative seemed to be confirmed by occurring interethnic violence, the support for nationalist parties, monks and discriminating politics only increased. Finally, desperation on the Rohingya side grew into armed insurgency, giving ANP the chance to fully exploit its self-asserted role as protector of Rakhine and its native inhabitants from a Muslim-terrorist threat. The parties' attitude is summed up in Table 4.

Quote	Interpretation	Implication
"Cessation of a race" "Benefit and development of another region" "Under threat of invasion"	Amplify siege mentality among Rakhine and thus argue for control over territory in which only Rakhine have right to rule (ancestral ties)	Unite Rakhine ethnic groups in order to grow support base Emotional appeals bear great potential to mobilise Opportunistic behaviour: Muslim threat picked up after communal violence and mobilisation by monks occurred

---

[490] Ibid., 38-39.
[491] Ibid., 35.
[492] Ibid., 38-40.
[493] Ibid., 28-29.

- 133 -

"They speak Bengali language so we will continue to call them Bengali" "Arakanese and our ethnic brothers", "Love your nationality, keep pure blood, be Rakhine"	Primordial interpretation of citizenship and identification of outsider Appeal to emotions and advancing of antipathy toward Rohingya, facilitating further separation	Demand containment of Rohingya "immigrants" and discriminatory laws to contain Muslim advancement Attitude congruent with religious chauvinist which allows them to easily link societal, religious and political actors (brokerage)
"They want to make sure local Rakhine people dare not live here" "Muslims will kill ethnic people when they get the chance"	Unilaterally ascribe malicious intend to all Rohingya Securitisation, especially salient after ARSA attacks	Justify extensive security measures Causes population to agree on extreme measures (self-defence)

TABLE 4 - RAKHINE PARTIES

5.2 THE BUDDHIST CLERGY

Analyses of the situation between Buddhists and Muslims during Myanmar's liberalisation either argue that simmering antagonisms of the country's colonial history re-emerged or that democratisation provided structural changes that benefitted the popularity of religious instigators- The latter argues that particularly, freedoms of assembly and expression as well as free media have facilitated actors to spread anti-Muslim sentiments. This takes place in an environment that contains insecurities that evolved during economic and social change. Both approaches generally agree that religious groups are in the centre of spreading the islamophobic narrative. Nyi Nyi Kyaw argues that a historic "siege mentality" and "myth of deracination "[494] are the foundation of the propaganda of Buddhist nationalists as well as for its acceptance by Burmese society. Previously exploited by the military dictatorship in its nation-building efforts to unify the various Burmese ethnic groups under one banner, this narrative is nowadays propagated by individual as well as religious groups such as the 969 Movement and Ma Ba Tha. The need of special protection of Buddhism, confronted with an alleged Muslim invasion, plays a central role in this narrative.

---

[494] Nyi Nyi Kyaw, "Islamophobia in Buddhist Myanmar: The 969 Movement and Anti-Muslim Violence," *Islam and the State in Myanmar: Muslim-Buddhist relations and the politics of belonging* (2016)., 194.

5.2.1 EMERGENCE OF THE 969 MOVEMENT AND MA BA THA

The 969 Movement was not the first organisation that connected state and religion. The Burmese military junta already set up a countermovement to the democracy-friendly monks of the 8888 Uprising in 1988. With hopes to co-opt some of Burma's Buddhists, it promoted renewal of the religion and society, infusing both with a hefty dose of nationalism. The state officially supported the merger of religion and state and actively published favourable writings and guidelines by religious figures. Under the authoritarian regime, this ideology enjoyed widespread acceptance within the Bamar majority in Myanmar. The movement of Buddhist nationalism gained momentum perpetuated by the attacks on the World Trade Centre and the destruction of Buddhist statues in Afghanistan in 2001. That year also saw the first appearance of Ashin Wirathu, who was shortly after imprisoned for inciting anti-Muslim riots. Wirathu was prematurely released in 2011, just before anti-Muslim violence erupted again in 2012 and 2013.[495] His release is considered the initial spark of the movement, as the group's prominence and activities increased by that time. The 969 movement served like a reservoir for nationalist monks and their followers, convening them into a more or less unified group. Through billboards and stickers, the movement gained visibility. The symbols placed in public places made it easy to identify who is a devote supporter and consequently benefitted the networking of likeminded people.

Religious monks linked to 969, have given sermons in towns and regions that were previously a site of communal violence. Although they claim that their primary goal was to "share a religious experience", "show sympathy to the people who are suffering"[496] and support the people from the Buddhist mainland, their role was far from pacifying. On the contrary, areas in which monks preached nationalist sermons later saw an increase of communal tensions.[497] A great deal of these speeches appealed to xenophobic sentiments and deep-seated existential fears. Public events of the 969 movements were often accompanied by a pop song titled "Song to Whip Up Religious Blood". The song contains emotionally charged lines such as people who "live in our land, drink our water, and are ungrateful to us" and "we will build a fence with our

---

[495] Perter A. Coclanis, "Terror in Burma: Buddhists Vs. Muslims," World Affairs Institute, http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/terror-burma-buddhists-vs-muslims.

[496] Lawi Weng, "Extremist Monks Hold Talks Throughout Strife-Torn Arakan State," The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/extremist-monks-hold-talks-throughout-strife-torn-arakan-state.html.

[497] "Hidden Hands Behind Communal Violence in Myanmar: Case Study of the Mandalay Riots," in *Justice Trust Policy Report* (New York: Justice Trust, 2015)., 16.

bones, if necessary."[498] In essence, it appeals to Rakhine to unite and defend their home against invaders in a last stand. As emotions like anger and contempt are very likely to translate into collective action,[499] it is almost certain that religious sermons and anti-Muslim propaganda are connected to outbreaks of violence. However, religious leaders continuously deny any involvement in violence or its approval.[500] Nevertheless did the state authority responsible for the regulation of the Buddhist clergy prohibit the formation of official organisations based around the 969 movement in 2013. The promotion of their ideology through monks however remained unregulated.[501] Nevertheless, in order for nationalist monks to have an official outlet to lobby for religious protection, a different organisation had to be formed.

Much of the campaign against Muslims continued under the umbrella of Ma Ba Tha. Ma Ba Tha formed in 2014. In contrast to the relatively unorganised 969-movement, it is an organisation with clear structure and a political goal as well as a direct cooperation with political parties. As a distributor of educational materials, the organisation additionally has a great impact on public opinion.[502] It incorporated the 969-idea of a Buddhist nation that has to be shielded from a Muslim attack. Although some members try to spread a positive image of an inclusive Buddhism in Myanmar, the majority of Ma Ba Tha's actions and publications are directed against Muslims. On its inaugural meeting in 2013, the organisation set its goals as followed,

> (a) to raise public awareness about the need for racial protection and the dangers of religious conflicts, (b) to establish peaceful co-existence among different religions in Myanmar through 'unity and maintenance of discipline,' and (c) to safeguard 'race and religion within a legal framework'.[503]

Ma Ba Tha envisioned achieving these goals through the propagation of Buddhist teachings via schools and education and the promulgation of laws to protect the "race and religion."[504] The organisation openly gave voting recommendations in favour of a national spirit. It declared to

---

[498] Thomas Fuller, "Extremism Rises among Myanmar Buddhists," The New York Times, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/21/world/asia/extremism-rises-among-myanmar-buddhists-wary-of-muslim-minority.html?hp&pagewanted=all.

[499] Nicole Tausch et al., "Explaining Radical Group Behavior: Developing Emotion and Efficacy Routes to Normative and Nonnormative Collective Action," *Journal of personality and social psychology* 101, no. 1 (2011).

[500] Fuller, "Extremism Rises among Myanmar Buddhists".

[501] Jared Ferrie and Min Zayar Oo, "Myanmar Buddhist Committee Bans Anti-Muslim Organisations," Reuters, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-buddhism/myanmar-buddhist-committee-bans-anti-muslim-organizations-idUSBRE98A0EP20130911.

[502] Matthew J Walton and Susan Hayward, "Contesting Buddhist Narratives: Democratization, Nationalism, and Communal Violence in Myanmar," *Policy Studies*, no. 71 (2014)., 14-16.

[503] Iselin Frydenlund, "The Birth of Buddhist Politics of Religious Freedom in Myanmar," *Journal of Religious and Political Practice* 4, no. 1 (2018)., 5.

[504] Ibid., 5.

"urge the people to vote for MPs who protect race and religion, instead of emphasizing a particular party or people."[505] Prior to the 2015 election, Ma Ba Tha openly advised Buddhists to support the USDP. During the Thein Sein tenure, Ma Ba Tha's influence was at its peak and policies to safeguard Buddhism were implemented. Their connection to the central government faded after the NLD took power. Both actors never engaged in a cooperative relation. Ma Ba Tha members considered the NLD as a party that does not care enough for Buddhist affairs because it opposed the "race and religion" laws and allegedly approached Muslims in order to secure their votes.[506] The position of religious groups proofed to be contested during the NLD tenure. Ma Ba Tha, despite its popularity, found itself in a defensive position. Over time and with growing international attention, the new government increasingly confronted extremist nationalist views. Eventually, the state-backed cleric organisation MaHaNa declared Ma Ba Tha an unlawful organisation and prohibited the organisation's activities in May 2017.[507] Since Ma Ba Tha is banned from continuing its activities as a religious organisation, it formed a political party to contest the incumbent NLD and its alleged inability to protect Buddhist interests.[508]

5.2.2 GOOD RELATIONS OF MA BA THA AND USDP?

Contrary to some interpretations of western media is Ma Ba Tha not an organisation that solely thrives from nationalist Buddhism. It indeed benefits from a perceived need to protect Buddhism, but its activities are multifaceted and not always connected to extremist ideology. Ma Ba Tha affiliates with Buddhist Sunday Schools, volunteering activities, legal clinics, relief campaigns, donation campaigns and other community activities.[509] It consequently addresses humanitarian issues as well as the protection of religion, making it attractive for a broad audience of concerned Buddhists.[510]

---

[505] John Zaw and Simon Lewis, "Hardline Monks Turn up Political Heat Ahead of Myanmar Elections," Union of Catholic Asian News, https://www.ucanews.com/news/hardline-monks-turn-up-political-heat-ahead-of-myanmar-elections/73822.

[506] Sithu Aung Myint, "Ma Ba Tha, Usdp: Election Bedfellows?," The Myanmar Times, Ma Ba Tha, USDP: election bedfellows?

[507] Moe Moe, "Ma Ba Tha Changes Name, Still Officially Illegal," The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/ma-ba-tha-changes-name-still-officially-illegal.html.

[508] Lawi Weng, "Ma Ba Tha's New Political Party Denounces Nld Govt," The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/ma-ba-thas-new-political-party-denounces-nld-govt.html.

[509] Walton, "Misunderstanding Myanmar's Ma Ba Tha".

[510] Ibid.

As the USDP faced electoral defeat against the NLD, state and clergy intensified their cooperation. After violence occurred in Rakhine state, the government found an ally in Ashin Wirathu, who simultaneously promoted the need of resistance against alleged Muslim domination under the right to self-protection. The mobilisation of concerned Burmese through the narrative of innocent Buddhists that need to defend themselves from an external aggressor, best through expulsion of the threatening collective, proved to be a chance for the USDP to gain popular support. Hence, the incumbent government supported nationalist monks and in return received their approval as capable guardian of Buddhism in Myanmar. Consequently, monks like Wirathu enjoyed the freedom to make public appearances and speeches unobstructedly, as it served the government's anti-Muslim agenda.[511] Despite the government's and Monk's declaration to not promote violence, nationalist monks were given permission to hold sermons in townships in the contested Rakhine state.[512] The granted freedom was repaid with support for the government's position. Wirathu, for example, led a march of thousands of monks in Mandalay in 2012, urging citizens to support Thein Seins proposal of considering Rohingya a threat to the motherland.[513]

Monks generally deny the acceptance of financial donations by politicians. However, on some occasions money transfers to monks or Ma Ba Tha were documented or admitted. Monks representing Ma Ba Tha accepted monetary donations by USDP members prior to the 2015 election.[514] Not only USDP politicians donated. Based on personal relations and affiliations NLD politicians likewise made donations to Ma Ba Tha affiliated monasteries. Reports by Wirathu and other monks claim that the Thein Sein government financially supported monks who publicly preach in favour of the nationalist movement.[515] This could either be considered as an attempt to buy Ma Ba Tha support, or as an extension of the historical duty of politics to care for the well-being of religious institutions.[516]

The state did not only passively support Buddhist nationalists through non-interference. Thein Sein's office moreover issued a statement criticising Time Magazine for publishing an

---

[511] MacManus, Green, and de la Cour Venning, *Countdown to Annihilation: Genocide in Myanmar.*, 62-63.

[512] Weng, "Extremist Monks Hold Talks Throughout Strife-Torn Arakan State".

[513] Walton and Hayward, "Contesting Buddhist Narratives: Democratization, Nationalism, and Communal Violence in Myanmar.", 13.

[514] Wa Lone, "Usdp Candidate Donates Big to Ma Ba Tha," The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/16287-usdp-candidate-donates-big-to-ma-ba-tha.html.

[515] Stoakes, "Monks, Powerpoints, and Ethnic Cleansing".

[516] "Buddhism and State Power in Myanmar.", 13-14.

article that portrayed Wirathu as a Buddhist terrorist.[517] Other evidence appears to confirm meetings of government officials and Ma Ba Tha officials with the aim to facilitate the of arrest Muslim dissidents.[518] Since no investigations of Wirathu's inflammatory speech has occurred during Sein's presidency,[519] it can be assumed that he enjoyed general support from the USDP and in the relevant official bodies. Although hard evidence for government support of 969 does not exist, it is noticeable how important political figures argue in favour of 969 and underline the movement's pacifistic nature. A Reuters report describes Myanmar's former minister of religious affairs as one of Wirathu's rigorous defenders. The report furthermore claims that politicians use the 969 movement to obstruct Suu Kyi's election and proposed reforms.[520]

Former leading monks furthermore claim that the military during the Thein Sein presidency effectively controlled the Sangha and was able to escalate conflicts purposefully through mobilisation via religious preaching.[521] So the real extend of political and religious entanglement might remain a puzzle. It is however obvious that extremist Buddhist groups enjoyed a special position in Myanmar and had the ability to successfully lobby the state under USDP rule to promote their agenda. The government not only supported religious extremists financially, but also through persecution of their opponents and in spreading the anti-Muslim sentiments through official channels.

5.2.3 METHODS OF SPREADING THEIR NARRATIVE

The loose coalition of mobilised individuals, named 969, gained traction and prominence through public sermons and succeeding mouth-to-mouth propaganda.[522] The public visibility of the movement increased with the use of stickers, showing the 969 symbol, as a countermovement to Muslim 786 labels. While the latter has the practical purpose to inform Muslims where to get halal food, the former is part of the campaign that encourages people to "buy Buddhist" and boycott Muslim business.[523] The monk's activities were furthermore

---

[517] Hanna Hindstrom, "Burma President Backs Anti-Muslim 'Hate Preacher' Wirathu," Democratic Voice of Burma, http://www.dvb.no/news/politics-news/burma-president-backs-anti-muslim-%E2%80%98hate-preacher%E2%80%99-wirathu/28955.
[518] Stoakes, "Monks, Powerpoints, and Ethnic Cleansing".
[519] "Hidden Hands Behind Communal Violence in Myanmar: Case Study of the Mandalay Riots.", 17-18.
[520] Andrew R.C. Marshall, "Myanmar's Official Embrace of Extreme Buddhism," in *Reuters Special Report*, ed. Bill Tarrant and Michael Williams (Reuters, 2013)., 3.
[521] MacManus, Green, and de la Cour Venning, *Countdown to Annihilation: Genocide in Myanmar*., 59-60.
[522] Kyaw, "Islamophobia in Buddhist Myanmar: The 969 Movement and Anti-Muslim Violence.", 208-209.
[523] Walton and Hayward, "Contesting Buddhist Narratives: Democratization, Nationalism, and Communal Violence in Myanmar.", 14.

supplemented through distribution of leaflets, journals and DVDs. The public seldom questions the credibility of these, leading to acceptance of crooked causal relations such as "Muslims who kill cows will also kill Buddhists."[524] Hence it was not access to political actors that perpetuated the movement, but the monks' "ability to exercise their religious authority in the deeply Buddhist Myanmar: through preaching, rituals in sacred sites, signature campaigns, and communication through both print and social media."[525]

The distributed leaflets and pamphlets typically reproduce all the assumptions made by nationalist monks in their sermons, including labelling of Muslims as foreigners and an alleged plot to take possession of the country. Translations by Burma Campaign UK offer an insight on the crude propaganda spread through leaflets and letters. They assume a plot by Muslim "Kalar" to wipe out the local Buddhist populations. Alleged proof are previous riots such as the Mujahedeen rebellion and re-emerging Muslim unity in preparation for further rebellions, support by Saudi Arabia and a suspected alliance with Burmese state authorities. Gatherings of Muslims and religious activities are interpreted as preparation for another uprising.[526] The prevalent strategy of Muslims allegedly is to buy land, accumulate money, take Buddhist wives and "to leave out blood and genes with them."[527] To "fight out those Kalars, who have been living on our land, drinking our water, eating our rice but plotting heinous ideas to wipe out Buddhism"[528] the leaflets call for a boycott of Muslim business, not selling property to Muslims, increased nationalism and refusal to marry a Muslim.[529]

Nationalist monks certainly make use of digitalisation in Myanmar. Wirathu and other monks use personal blogs, YouTube and Facebook to distribute videos of their sermons as well as information about alleged Muslim crimes and atrocities.[530] Burmese internet users quickly picked up their narrative and culture of assaulting Muslims and liberal media established itself in Myanmar. Under the assumption that the right of free speech justifies any expression, a significant part of Burmese online discourse turned openly hostile and derogatory towards Muslims and liberal media.[531] Even state media is far from neutral and provides a platform for

---

[524] MacManus, Green, and de la Cour Venning, *Countdown to Annihilation: Genocide in Myanmar*., 64-65.

[525] Frydenlund, "The Birth of Buddhist Politics of Religious Freedom in Myanmar.", 6.

[526] "Examples of Anti-Muslim Propaganda," in *Burma Briefing* (London: Burma Campaign UK for Human Rights, Democracy & Development in Burma, 2013)., 2-3.

[527] Ibid., 6.

[528] Ibid., 5.

[529] Ibid.

[530] Benjamin Schonthal and Matthew J Walton, "The (New) Buddhist Nationalisms? Symmetries and Specificities in Sri Lanka and Myanmar," *Contemporary Buddhism* 17, no. 1 (2016)., 106.

[531] Sai Latt, "Bbc under Fire on Rohingyas " newmandala.org, http://www.newmandala.org/bbc-under-fire-on-rohingyas/.

anti-Muslim propaganda by publishing denunciating articles.[532] The biased reporting and discourse is so severe, that the U.N. Independent International Fact Finding Mission on Myanmar assumes that social media and hate speech had played a determining role in the Myanmar crisis.[533] The anti-Muslim rhetoric, initiated by monks, was perpetuated chiefly on Facebook. As the number of Facebook users climbed sharply from 1.2 million in 2014 to 18 million in 2018, the service gained a significant role in distribution of news and opinions in Myanmar. It became the major source of information for Burmese citizens and even the government uses it to make major announcements.[534] Aware of its influence in the violence in 2017, Facebook removed the accounts of central figures such as Min Aung Hlaing[535] and Wirathu in 2018.[536]

The impact social media had on public discourse is rooted in the characteristics of Burmese interpersonal communication and the characteristic algorithms of social media. Schissler pointed out that due to decades of oppression and untrustworthy state-controlled media, mouth-to-mouth communication and rumours are an essential part of news gathering in Myanmar. Social media in Myanmar de facto functions as an extension of mouth-to-mouth communication between two acquainted individuals. The result is that information and often "fake news" on social media are accepted without verification of the source's credibility.[537] An UNESCO report attests lacking media literacy to the Burmese population and alarming prominence of religious intolerance on social media.[538] Spread of misinformation is only exacerbated by the medium's possibilities to deploy graphic and immersive content, making it a dangerous tool for the distribution of hate speech.[539] Furthermore, algorithms of social media benefit the existence of so called "filter bubbles" in which social media users only see

---

[532] Khin Maung Oo, "A Flea Cannot Make a Whirl of Dust," *The Global New Light of Myanmar*, 11.27. 2016.

[533] Tom Miles, "U.N. Investigators Cite Facebook Role in Myanmar Crisis," Reuters, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-iran-sanctions-anger/facing-new-sanctions-iranians-vent-anger-at-rich-and-powerful-idUSKCN1NC0J5.

[534] Steve Stecklow et al., "Why Facebook Is Losing the War on Hate Speech in Myanmar," Reuters, https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/myanmar-facebook-hate/.

[535] Facebook, "Removing Myanmar Military Officials from Facebook," Facebook, https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2018/08/removing-myanmar-officials/.

[536] Laignee Barron, "Nationalist Monk Known as the 'Burmese Bin Laden' Has Been Stopped from Spreading Hate on Facebook," Time Magazine, http://time.com/5178790/facebook-removes-wirathu/.

[537] Matthew Schissler, "New Technologies, Established Practices: Developing Narratives of Muslim Threat in Myanmar," *Islam and the State in Myanmar: Muslim-Buddhist Relations and the Politics of Belonging* (2016).

[538] "Assessment of Media Development in Myanmar: Based on Unesco's Media Development Indicators," in *The International Programme for the Development of Communication* (Bangkok: UNESCO Office Bangkok and Regional Bureau for Education in Asia and the Pacific; International Media Support (Denmark), 2016)., xxii.

[539] Ashley S. Kinseth, "Genocide in the Modern Era: Social Nedia and the Proliferation of Hate Speech in Myanmar," Tea Circle Oxford, https://teacircleoxford.com/2018/05/10/genocide-in-the-modern-era-social-media-and-the-proliferation-of-hate-speech-in-myanmar/.

worldviews representing their own opinion. Additionally, the algorithm-based media dominance of majority opinions discourages alternative worldviews, eventually causing a spiral of silence that furthermore diminishes opposition and encourages outspoken advocates of a majority opinion.[540] As a result, the majority of opinions on Rohingya on Burmese social media are extremely hostile.

In sum, chauvinist monks utilised a variety of media from the traditional sermons to DVDs and social media. The fact that in Myanmar propagation of hostile narratives was eased through unregulated media and subsequently contributed to the outbreak of communal violence as well as created an emotionally charged climate, in which a campaign of ethnic cleansing could occur with impunity, confirms findings that newly gained media freedoms contribute to the deepening of ethnic cleavages and eventually make conflict more likely.

5.2.4 WIRATHU'S AND OTHER MONKS' NARRATIVE

The most outspoken and prominent figure of 969 and Ma Ba Tha is the monk Wirathu, labelled by Time magazine as "the Buddhist face of terror". Although he is the most prominent and radical key figure and probably the person who started the ball rolling, he is not the only influential nationalist monk in Mynamar. Many others such as Sithagu Sayadaw, U Parmoukkha or Ashin Wimala Biwuntha reproduce his narrative and rail against Muslims. All of them are prominent figures in Myanmar and attract a big audience.

Sayadaw, for example, mocked claims of genocide and the death of Rohingya in 2012 with the words: "Just a hundred or two hundred were killed. Who says that is genocide? Many people are out there."[541] Sayadaw advocated an alliance between government, military and Buddhist clergy. In a sermon at a military garrison, Sayadaw justified the killing of Muslims in order to protect Buddhism by referring to the parable of King Dutugemunu in Sri Lanka. The tale describes how the king is discharged of being guilty for killing countless Muslims in the protection of Buddhism, as the numerous dead Muslims only account for "one and a half real human beings."[542] U Parmoukkha displayed his anti-Rohingya stance as he organised a public

---

[540] Merlyna Lim, "Freedom to Hate: Social Media, Algorithmic Enclaves, and the Rise of Tribal Nationalism in Indonesia," *Critical Asian Studies* 49, no. 3 (2017).

[541] Aung Thura, "Myanmar Prominent Buddhist Monk Cheers Israeli Violations over Palestinians," MMedia, http://www.m-mediagroup.com/en/archives/8730.

[542] Mratt Kyaw Thu, "Tatmadaw, Sangha and Government Must Work Together, Sitagu Sayadaw Says in Sermon to Officers," Frontier Myanmar, https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/tatmadaw-sangha-and-government-must-work-together-sitagu-sayadaw-says-in-sermon-to-officers.

protest against the use of the term Rohingya. Police forces arrested and imprisoned him for inciting Islamophobia and staging a protest without permission. [543] Biwuntha, another charismatic member of 969, described the Buddhists as on a sinking boat and predicts that "if this does not change, our race and religion will soon vanish."[544] This narrative of a threatened ethnicity is widespread and persistent among the public as well as among monks related to 969 or Ma Ba Tha.[545] Ashin Sada Ma, at the time 969 secretary, spread fear of Islamisation through distortion of history and fear of a Muslim conquest. He proclaimed, "Only small parts of Asia are Buddhist now; in the past Indonesia, Bangladesh, Afghanistan and many other places including Turkey and Iraq were Buddhist countries, but now they are lost."[546]

Wirathu, whose mother began a relationship with a Muslim shopkeeper after her husband died,[547] is without doubt the centre of creating and spreading this narrative. At first, he occasionally found relatively moderate words to express that coexistence of Muslims and Buddhists is a problematic issue. In 2013 he said, "Buddhists can talk with Muslims, but not marry them; there can be friendship between them, but not trade."[548] But in general, his attitude and expressions turned more radical over time. In October 2017, he ranted: "Do they [Rohingya] eat rice through their backsides and excrete through their mouths? They are the opposite of everything in nature."[549]

Wirathu claims that his speeches are neither racist nor hateful. They rather serve the purpose of warning and protecting his people or „flock" like a barking dog.[550] He furthermore denies any involvement in violence or responsibility to mobilise violent mobs. In a BBC documentary he said, "If the conflict had started because of my preachings in areas where I preach, then our side could have started it, but that is not what happened. They attacked us and we responded, that's how I see it."[551] Yet, he does not hide his approval of attacks on Muslims.

---

[543] San Yamin Aung, "Seven Charged with Illegal Assembly after Us Embassy Protest," The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/seven-charged-with-illegal-assembly-after-us-embassy-protest.html.

[544] MacManus, Green, and de la Cour Venning, *Countdown to Annihilation: Genocide in Myanmar*., 62.

[545] Ibid., 63-65.

[546] Carlos Sardiña Galache, "Who Are the Monks Behind Burma's 969 Campaign?," Democratic Voice of Burma, http://www.dvb.no/news/features-news/the-monks-behind-burma%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%9C969%E2%80%9Dmovement-2/28079.

[547] James Hookway, "Buddhist Leader Spreads Hatred of Muslims in Myanmar," *Dow Jones Institutional News*, 10/12/

2017 Oct 12 2017.

[548] Galache, "Who Are the Monks Behind Burma's 969 Campaign?".

[549] Hookway, "Buddhist Leader Spreads Hatred of Muslims in Myanmar."

[550] Marella Oppenheim, "'It Only Takes One Terrorist': The Buddhist Monk Who Reviles Myanmar's Muslims," The Guardian, https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2017/may/12/only-takes-one-terrorist-buddhist-monk-reviles-myanmar-muslims-rohingya-refugees-ashin-wirathu.

[551] Jonah Fisher, "Bbc News Channel "Our World" Myanmar's Extremist Monk," (Youtube, 2013)., [14:50-15:09].

In a sermon, he commented the destruction of Muslim homes near Meiktila and massacre of Muslims, including schoolchildren, as a necessary display of strength.[552] He was eventually banned from preaching from March 2017 to March 2018 by the highest Buddhist authority of Myanmar, the Ma Ha Na.[553] Additionally Facebook has deleted his account under the accusation that Wirathu is responsible for spreading hate speech and stoking up sectarian violence.[554]

Wirathu at the beginning proclaimed that he discovered a Muslim conspiracy to "conquer Burma through economic exploitation and inter-faith marriage."[555] He claimed that Muslims control construction companies and get favourable contracts in Burma. Their beneficial position allegedly originates in a good relationship with the military. This alliance is not a product of mutual sympathy, but of the Muslims efforts to advance their own race, Wirathu claimed.[556] The ideas of conspiracy extend to foreign countries and NGOs, which channel money to Rohingya recipients.[557] Among Muslims, Wirathu assumes a strong coherence and nationalism with the goal to conquer Myanmar. "When they do business, they do it in nationalist sense. That is why; they keep buying land and properties everywhere. They use the power of money to get women, to attract women; they all do it for their people in a nationalist sense.[558] He consequently invoked visions of a Muslim-dominated Myanmar in the future. Pamphlets handed out at Wirathu's sermon read "Myanmar is currently facing a most dangerous and fearful poison that is severe enough to eradicate all civilisation."[559] This implies that he does not consider Muslims as equally cultured or a Muslim nation as civilisation. ."[560] His proposed solution to empower the local ethnicities in their resistance was a boycott of Muslim business and support of the businesses displaying the 969 logo.[561]

---

[552] Fuller, "Extremism Rises among Myanmar Buddhists".

[553] Htun Htun, "Yearlong Preaching Ban on Firebrand Monk Almost Up," The Irrawaddy https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/yearlong-preaching-ban-firebrand-monk-almost.html.

[554] Barron, "Nationalist Monk Known as the 'Burmese Bin Laden' Has Been Stopped from Spreading Hate on Facebook".

[555] Galache, "Who Are the Monks Behind Burma's 969 Campaign?".

[556] M-Media, "Fanatical Buddhist Monk Saydaw Wirathu Calling for Boycott of Myanmar Muslims [Video]," (Youtube.com, 2013)., [1:39-3:05].

[557] Alex Preston, "The Rohingya and Myanmar's 'Buddhist Bin Laden'," GQ (Gentlemen's Quarterly), https://www.gq-magazine.co.uk/article/myanmar-rohingya-muslim-burma.

[558] M-Media, "Fanatical Buddhist Monk Saydaw Wirathu Calling for Boycott of Myanmar Muslims [Video].", [5:21 – 5:38].

[559] Fuller, "Extremism Rises among Myanmar Buddhists".

[560] Sebastian Strangio, "Wirathu: "The Intention of Islam Is to Influence the Whole World through Rapid Population"," Southeast Asia Globe, http://sea-globe.com/wirathu-interview-sebastian-strangio-southeast-asia-globe/.

[561] M-Media, "Fanatical Buddhist Monk Saydaw Wirathu Calling for Boycott of Myanmar Muslims [Video].", [8:26-10:43].

An essential part of the anti-Muslim narrative revolves around the protection of women from predatory Muslim men. It is purportedly a plan of the Muslim "invaders" to attract Buddhist women through wealth, marry and forcefully convert them and finally make them give birth to as many Muslim children as possible. Wirathu claims and epidemic of rapes by Muslim men. He typically refers to information picked up on the internet. His allegations are not backed by hard evidence, yet he insists, "Every town or city where Buddhist women get married to Muslim men, women have those kinds of experiences."[562] He therefore defended the race and religion laws as serving the dual purpose of defending women from hostile marriages and containing the "Bengalis that call themselves Rohingya, who are trying to seize Rakhine state."[563]

In Wirathu's crooked view, "Muslims are only well behaved when they are weak. […] When they are strong they are like a wolf or jackal, in large packs they hunt down other animals."[564] On another occasion, he preached, "You can be full of kindness and love, but you cannot sleep next to a mad dog."[565] Wirathu compared Muslim to African carp in one of his sermons. "They breed rapidly, they have violent behaviour and eat its own kind and other fishes. They also destroy the natural resources and beauty under water."[566] Linking Muslims to predatory animals, appeals to a primordial sense of man or civilisation against the wild. The adversary is reduced to a pack of creatures, which, without rationality expands, hunts and feasts on the weak. Neither will they ever change their nature. This narrative on the one hand involves an idea of different conflicting species or races, and on the other attributes strengths in numbers to the threatening group. Departing from these assumption, containment of population size of the other group is the most efficient way to protect the own group. Radical Buddhist used another animalistic metaphor when it comes to appealing to economic nationalism. 969 depicted Muslims as leeches that take away wealth of the poor and upright Burmese population in a parasitic manner.[567] A similar metaphor of "lice that live under the skin" was used by Wirathu to discredit opponents of the "race and religion" laws.[568]

---

[562] Strangio, "Wirathu: "The Intention of Islam Is to Influence the Whole World through Rapid Population"".
[563] Nobel Zaw, "Population Control Bill Could 'Stop the Bengalis': Wirathu," The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/population-control-bill-could-stop-the-bengalis-wirathu.html.
[564] Sarah Kaplan, "The Serene-Looking Buddhist Monk Accused of Inciting Burma's Sectarian Violence," The Washington Post, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/05/27/the-burmese-bin-laden-fueling-the-rohingya-migrant-crisis-in-southeast-asia/?utm_term=.f872db60c9be.
[565] Fuller, "Extremism Rises among Myanmar Buddhists".
[566] Ting Aung Kyaw et al., "The Monk Preaching Myanmar's Buddhist Nationalism Mandalay, Myanmar," ed. Open Hands Initiative Global Post (PoliticallyRude, 2013)., [2:18-2:45].
[567] Maung Zarni, interview by Ray Downs, 2013.
[568] "Hidden Hands Behind Communal Violence in Myanmar: Case Study of the Mandalay Riots.", 17.

Wirathu's motivations cannot be assessed rationally. He is either convinced of a real Muslim threat, enjoys being centre of public attention, pursues power and influence or a combination of all. In an interview, he denied any aspirations and underlined his self-conception as a protector. "I am not pretending like a politician for the sake of power. I have a deep love for this country.[569]

In any case is Wirathu the centre of the islamophobic propaganda. Suspecting a Muslims conspiracy to take over Myanmar through marriage or by force, he openly vilifies Muslims as rapists and invaders relying more on folklore than on evidence. He invokes a primordial battle between two ethnic groups; one civilised and innocent, the other one animally and predatory. His generalisations attribute these characteristics to the respective groups. In that sense, his way of arguing resembles the primodialist custom of ascribing ethnic group belonging and certain characteristic through blood ties and shared history. Eventually the propaganda dehumanized Rohingya as an existential threat and greatly contributed to climate that allowed for large-scale military campaigns against a civilian group.

5.2.5 EVOLUTION OF THE ANTI-MUSLIM NARRATIVE AND RESPECTIVE DEMANDS

The earliest nature of the anti-Muslim campaign during Myanmar's liberalisation was to cut off Muslims from sources of income and to limit contact between Buddhist and Muslim communities in order to prevent Muslim expansion. The plans event went so far that some people intended to boycott a phone provider because the company is based in Qatar.[570] In order to publicise their plans, monks distributed pamphlets in 2012, urging all Arakanese to not associate with "Bengalis" or do business with them. These early pamphlets already contained the suspicion of a Muslim invasion that aims to eliminate the Arakanese population. The Buddhist community shared the governmental stance that Rohingya should best be deported. In an interview in 2012 a monk, apart from denying Rohingya the right to identify as Burmese stated, "Around the world there are many Muslim countries. They should go there: The Muslim countries should take care of them. They should go to a country with the same religion."[571]

---

[569] Fisher, "Bbc News Channel "Our World" Myanmar's Extremist Monk.", [24:53- 25:05]

[570] Asia News, "Burmese Buddhists against Qatar Mobile Phone Company: "Boycott Muslims"," AsiaNews.it, http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Burmese-Buddhists-against-Qatar-mobile-phone-company:-Boycott-Muslims-31271.html.

[571] Feargal Keane, "The Burmese Monks Who Preach Intolerance against Muslim Rohingyas," (BBC News, 2012)., [5:49 – 6:03].

In July that year, a meeting of monks representing the religious community in northern Rakhine presented a 12-point-statement, with the plans for an ethnic cleansing of Rohingya. The statement calls on Arakanese to refrain from employing Rohingya in any sort of jobs and demands a withdrawal of NGOs that support the Muslim minority. The declarations assume that Rohingya "want to destroy the land of Arakan, are eating Arakan rice and plan to exterminate Arakanese people."[572] The monks' association in Mrauk-U published a statement of similar nature shortly after.[573] Monks later on participated in the previously discussed 2012 Rathidaung conference. The results of the conference resembled previous demands of nationalist religious force, but moved away from boycotts to more serious demands of increased security, segregation and population control.

After the incidents of communal violence, the narrative of a threat to race and religion through jihad, terrorism or Muslim autonomous regions was introduced.[574] In a 10-point declaration made public at mass gathering of monks 2014, monastics voiced demands of particular interest. Some of the demands extend the ones made at the Rathidaung conference. The declaration urged an enforcement of the 1982 citizenship law. Together with the plan to exclude Rohingya from parliament through the examination of non-national parliamentarians, and the suggestion to withdraw voting rights of white card holders, the declaration clearly intends an exclusion of Rohingya, especially from the political sphere.[575]

Wirathu had already warned of a jihad in Myanmar before ARSA appeared on the scene in 2016. Already in 2015, he suspected that Rohingya refugees would launch a holy war if they would be allowed to join Muslim communities in Myanmar.[576] The local population accepted the recently provided narrative of Muslim terrorists without questioning. They suspected mosques as place of terrorist indoctrination, storages of weapons and point of contact to Taliban.[577] Nationalist Buddhists saw their suspicions confirmed by the attacks of ARSA. Although Ma Ba Tha was practically defunct before August 2017, the organisation still used its weekly newspaper to propagate an alleged threat of Bengali Muslims and reconfirm an

---

[572] Smith, *" All You Can Do Is Pray": Crimes against Humanity and Ethnic Cleansing of Rohingya Muslims in Burma's Arakan State.*, 26.

[573] Ibid., 26.

[574] MacManus, Green, and de la Cour Venning, *Countdown to Annihilation: Genocide in Myanmar.*, 62-64.

[575] Frydenlund, "The Birth of Buddhist Politics of Religious Freedom in Myanmar.", 5.

[576] Zaw and Lewis, "Hardline Monks Turn up Political Heat Ahead of Myanmar Elections".

[577] Smith, *" All You Can Do Is Pray": Crimes against Humanity and Ethnic Cleansing of Rohingya Muslims in Burma's Arakan State.*, 25-29.

existential fight between two "races".[578] After the expulsion of Rohingya in 2017, a Ma Ba Tha-affiliated monk emphasised the fear of extinction of Buddhist culture and rejected accusations of genocide.[579] Wirathu, banned from preaching, published a sermon on YouTube in which he laments that illegal immigration will lead to the destruction of religion in Myanmar, destruction of lives and rape. He claims "Bengalis are always blood thirsty. They have killed people of Rakhine State. They have burned Rakhine villages. They have destroyed the religion of Rakhine",[580] which will allegedly spread to Myanmar as a whole if not stopped. Interpreting the Rakhine State Crisis of 2017, Wirathu claimed he is not responsible for any violence in the region. Instead, Rakhine was struck by "terrorism of Bengalis".[581] As shown by these statements he not only confirms the worldview of other Rakhine nationalists of Rakhine as the gateway for an expanding Muslim community, but also utilises it to appeal to emotions of people in other Regions. Moreover, he interpreted the ARSA attacks as proof for his concerns and reinforced now preferably locates contentions in Rakhine within the realm of terrorism and protection from such.

In sum, demands of the religious community became more refined and goal-driven over time. Starting with blunt defamation, boycotts and creation of a bogeyman, public demands by nationalists switched to confident political protectionism, which revolves around the general perception of a Muslim threat. Compared to other actors, monks were the first to add the notion of terrorism to the pre-existing Islamophobia.

5.2.6 WHY ENGAGE IN POLITICS?

It is not clear why some Buddhists in Myanmar initiated nationalist and xenophobic movements. Liberalisation of the Myanmar's political and societal landscape saw them loose influence to civil society associations such as unions, political parties, student organisation, women's organisations and farmers associations.[582] Thus, the chauvinist behaviour serves to

---

[578] Joe Freeman, "Can Anyone Stop Burma's Hardline Buddhist Monks," The Atlantic, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/09/can-anyone-stop-burmas-hardline-buddhist-monks/538992/.

[579] Katie Hunt, "Rohingya Crisis: 'It's Not Genocide,' Say Myanmar's Hardline Monks " Cable News Network (CNN), https://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/25/asia/myanmar-buddhist-nationalism-mabatha/index.html.

[580] Smith et al., "They Gave Them Long Swords: Preparations for Genocide and Crimes against Humanity against Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine State, Myanmar.", 96.

[581] Shoon Naing, "Myanmar Monk Returns to Preaching after Ban, Denies Fuelling Rakhine Violence," Reuters, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-buddhist/myanmar-monk-returns-to-preaching-after-ban-denies-fuelling-rakhine-violence-idUSKCN1GM0GK.

[582] Hussain, "Federalism, Freedom and Fear-Mongering: Democratization and Violent Conflict in Rakhine State, Myanmar.", 28-29.

strengthen the coherence among the Buddhist population and secure the relevance of Buddhist institutions and the monkhood in the future. Furthermore, one could argue that the liberalisation of politics and society also provided opportunities for individual to gain power or wealth. These motives however do not apply sufficiently for the Burmese religious community, since members of the *sangha* lead a monastic life and live on alms or governmental donations and patronage. They are furthermore banned from running as candidates for political offices. The only comprehensive explanation for the merger of Buddhism and politics is the historic relation between the two realms. The conception of Buddhism and state in Myanmar is traditionally defined as a client patron relationship in which the state provides protection and cares for spread of Buddhism. Successfully securing the flourishing of religion and its protection from external threat as well as moral decay, endow the ruler with legitimacy and authority.[583] According to this logic, the clergy has to maintain moral behaviour among the population, as it is reflected by political action. It furthermore has to remind the state of its role as a protector of Buddhism. Consequently, 969 and Ma Ba Tha seek to "increase the centrality of Buddhism to the governance of Myanmar"[584] in order to secure the prevalence of Buddhism in Myanmar.

If the perceived threat equals the actual threat is in this case secondary. Looking at the issue through the lens of social constructivism, we can infer that the perceived threat is not solely defined by a realist material balance of power, but also ideological factors. Rousseau's "construction of threat model", bridging realist and constructivist theories on threat perception, assumes that a perception of threat posed by another country is influenced by material balance of power as well as perceived common or differing identity. A differing identity will cause individuals to consider the other as more threatening, despite the actual material conditions. In line with constructivist basics, identities are socially constructed through social interactions and can be purposefully manipulated by social entrepreneurs.[585] If we agree on the constructivist argument that groups naturally perceive other groups as more threatening if their identity differs and transfer this logic from states to ethnic groups, we can explain that, although Muslims in Myanmar do not have material capabilities to threaten state order and Buddhists, the threat of an occurrence of this is event is perceived as real. Due to differing identities, perpetually promoted by nationalist propaganda, the Muslim threat is perceived as more severe as it actually is. However, I assume that this mechanism is more distinct among the religious followers, than among the acting elites. Matthew J. Walton pointed out that the Buddhist community (sangha)

---

[583] Ibrahim, *The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar's Hidden Genocide.*, 80-83.
[584] Ibid., 82.
[585] David L Rousseau, *Identifying Threats and Threatening Identities: The Social Construction of Realism and Liberalism* (Stanford University Press, 2006)., 61-95.

in Myanmar is dissatisfied with the official religious authority (Ma Ha Na). The institution is criticised as state-run and detached from the daily concerns of the monkhood. Thus, it fails to fulfil its duties of protecting the Buddhist community and preserving its moral purity. This could explain why Ma Ba Tha attracted many followers and eventually reached out to the political realm. Again, failure to protect the religion is a motive, but moreover it highlights that the organisation emerged as an adversary to a defunct official institution.[586]

Other factors as well must increase anxiety among the Buddhist leadership. Among these are unknowingness if modernising society, economic growth and globalisation will cause secularisation in Myanmar, as well as global events, related to fundamental Islam and transnational terrorism, such as destruction of Buddhist statues by the Taliban, terrorist attacks in Southeast Asia, Thailand's conflict between monks and Muslims and the spread of ISIS/ISIL/Daesh.

The narrative, revolving around the necessary protection of Buddhism, is therefore a tool to urge the state allocate resources to safeguard the persistence of Buddhism. Results from the accompanying fear mongering are growing public support and eventually a deeper linkage between state and religious actors, which boost the traditional relations of patronage, and provision of legitimacy. Consequently, a natural linkage between religion and politics emerged, as both actors benefit from cooperation and can build on common ground, the protection of "race", to mobilize followers or gain supporters.

5.2.7 LOBBYING EFFORTS

Multiple events demonstrate that linkage and special status, granted to 969 and Ma Ba Tha by the state, translated into successful lobbying, especially during the USDP tenure. As mentioned before did the state care for free movement and opportunities for monks to hold sermons and supressed criticism. Aside official statements, it also cared for the legal prosecution conviction of dissidents. Referring to freedom of expression and religion, the national judiciary applied full force on all individuals that opposed Buddhist religious groups. A Muslim man was jailed for two years in 2013, after he removed a 969 sticker.[587] Hard verdicts struck Buddhists and Muslim detractors alike. Buddhist monk U Pinnyasiha faced a nationwide ban in 2013 for criticising the 969 movement as anti-Muslim, and trying to mediate during

---

[586] Matthew J Walton, "'Rowdy Monks' or a Crisis of Monastic Authority?," The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/guest-column/rowdy-monks-crisis-monastic-authority.html.

[587] MacManus, Green, and de la Cour Venning, *Countdown to Annihilation: Genocide in Myanmar*., 65.

violent conflicts between Muslims and Buddhists[588] In June 2015, politician Hin Lin Oo was sent to two years in jail and hard labour for criticising 969 Movement. He had voiced critique that extreme nationalism is incompatible with Buddhism and openly criticised monks who had given hate speeches.[589] The overall conditions for dissidents during Myanmar's liberalisation had not improved during the USDP tenure. Among the roughly 600 political prisoners or those facing politically motivated charges, the number of people charged with defamation or insulting religion was growing prior to 2016, according to Human Rights Watch.[590]

Governmental support of Ma Ba Tha's activities also extended into boycott-practices targeting religious business. Reports show that local authorities supported discriminatory practices against Muslim butcher shops and restaurant owners.[591] Supported by government officials, e.g. through generous discounts, Ma Ba Tha members obtained slaughterhouse licenses in southern regions of Myanmar, effectively ousting Muslim butchers and eventually restaurants from their previous source of income. In other cases, Ma Ba Tha helped raising funds to buy up the licenses. Additionally, government documents of 2014 instruct administrative personnel to cooperate with Ma Ba Tha to monitor Muslim slaughterhouses with the goal of withdrawing licenses for minor violations of regulations. The government furthermore approved a plan that involved seizing cattle and sending it to Buddhist in the northern parts of Rakhine.[592] It cannot be inferred that the local authorities acted under instruction of the central government. Yet, this example shows that personal identification with 969, Ma Ba Tha and their goals directly translated into support from regional top officials.

Suggestion such as the withdrawal of voting rights of white card holders, enforcement of the citizenship verification and exclusion of Muslim politicians were equally implemented. These efforts however cannot be attributed to religious actors alone. They were equally supported by the public and Rakhine parties. Religious actors in this case served as a connection between political and societal realm. The biggest and most obvious lobbying success of a religious group in Myanmar was the implementation of the "race and religion laws" shortly before the 2015 elections brought a change in government. Apparently, religious forces

---

[588] Ibid., 66.

[589] Aung Tun and Martin Petty, "Activists Outraged as Myanmar Jails Writer for Buddhist Insults," Reuters, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-religion/activists-outraged-as-myanmar-jails-writer-for-buddhist-insults-idUSKBN0OI24720150602.

[590] Human Rights Watch, "Burma: Growing Political Prisoner Population," Human Rights Watch, https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/17/burma-growing-political-prisoner-population.

[591] Swe Min, "Special Report - with Official Help, Myanmar's Radical Buddhists Target Muslim-Owned Businesses," Myanmar Now, http://www.myanmar-now.org/news/i/?id=9ba61afc-285d-49bd-8f73-8b9efaf941c0.

[592] Ibid.

expected the NLD, which distanced itself from the laws, to win in the 2015 election.[593] Ma Ba Tha therefore successfully pushed for the quick implementation of the laws and increased public support for the USDP. To display public approval of an implementation of the laws and to increase pressure on the government, Ma Ba Tha initiated a campaign of public demonstrations and collected around 1.5 million signatures in favour of the "race and religion protection bills".[594] To satisfy societal demands and gain voters, the USDP displayed itself as protector of Buddhism and in favour of the laws. Ma Ba Tha's ability to mobilize the public, bring up an electoral issue and cause a reaction by political actors demonstrate its influence on decision making in the country. Most outstanding is the fact that the laws were drafted and submitted by Ma Ba Tha without significant involvement of the state's legal institutions. Eventually, President Thein Sein implemented the laws, shortly before the election took place. Ma Ba Tha, in return openly supported the USDP based on their support of the discriminatory law. The NLD however was declared as a Muslim ally, because it did not support the laws. [595] Although the NLD eventually won the 2015 election, Ma Ba Tha was insofar successful as it coerced the NLD to refrain from fielding any Muslim candidates in the election.[596] During the NLD term, religious lobbying has not been as successful as before. The party has, as previously mentioned, undertaken measures to limit religious hate speech and the influence of semi-official religious institutions and has eventually succeeded in limiting Ma Ba Tha's activities.

In sum, chauvinist monks were the forerunners of the anti-Muslim narrative. Noatably, they were the first ones to warn of a Muslim conspiracy and terrorist intentions. Under heavy usage of emotional appeals, reference a primordial conflict and an exclusive myth-symbol complex, they crafted the image of Muslim conspirators and conquerers. Due to their central position in the Burmese society, they were able to mobilise the population and take their concerns to the political stage. The monk's attitude is summed up in Table 5.

---

[593] Frydenlund, "The Birth of Buddhist Politics of Religious Freedom in Myanmar.", 8.

[594] Evan Rees, "The Buddhist Core of Fractured Myanmar," Stratfor Worldview, https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/buddhist-core-fractured-myanmar.

[595] MacManus, Green, and de la Cour Venning, *Countdown to Annihilation: Genocide in Myanmar*., 65.

[596] "Buddhism and State Power in Myanmar.", 14.

Quote	Interpretation	Implication
"We will build a fence with our bones" to "fight out those Kalars, who have been living in our land, drinking our water, eating our rice but plotting heinous ideas to wipe out Buddhism"	Appeals to existential fears (Emotional appeals) Suspected Muslim plot and assumed unity *Kalar* = creation of out-group via visible features	Social mobilisation Sermons directly related to later conflicts Monks contribute to deepening cleavages Tolerated by USDP government
"They breed rapidly, they have violent behaviour and eat its own kind […] They also destroy the natural resources and beauty"	Animalistic metaphors to imply fight for survival between the civilisation and savages	Justify extreme means for self-defence and align people for it
"Awareness about the need for racial protection and the dangers of religious conflict" "safeguard 'race and religion within a legal framework'" (2013) "they will launch a jihad against the local Rakhine Buddhists" (2015)	From suspected conspiracy to existential struggle to terrorist threat Securitisation and demand institutionalisation of security by appealing to state and it's duty to safeguard Buddhism Warn of a terrorism prior to ARSA attacks, backed by advance of IS and suspicions of Muslim terror during that time	From misguided social movement (969) to influential organisation Narrative becomes more radical Successfully draft and lobby for "race and religion protection laws" First ones to bring up Muslim conspiracy and terrorist intentions

TABLE 5 - CHAUVINIST MONKS

5.3 SUMMARY

Both Rakhine parties, RNDP and ANP, are conceptualised around the protection of the native Rakhine ethnic groups. Like other actors, the parties propagated a narrative of an existential threat to the local ethnic groups. Communal violence played in the hands of the Rakhine parties, because it confirmed their narrative and extended the size of their support base. The narrative considers the Rakhine people as encircled by the central government and military on the one side and mal-intended Muslims on the other. In this course, the party members frequently appealed to emotions by predicting a loss of sovereignty over their homeland and eventually the cessation of a race. Yet, they identify two adversaries, which makes the situation for the Rakhine appear more desperate. Despite lamenting exploitation by the central government, the Rakhine parties' stance on Rohingya does not differ significantly from USDP, Tatmadaw or religious actors. Rohingya are generally deemed as illegal immigrants, who have

no right to citizenship. Granting rights to them, moreover, is portrayed is a challenge to Rakhine people and their sovereignty. This narrative was increasingly enriched with notions of terrorism and a planned takeover, which seemed to be confirmed by the emergence of ARSA. The Rakhine parties stand out through their effective networking with societal and religious actors within Rakhine state. In combination with their considerable influence in the national parliament, the potential to mobilise allowed them to effectively carry issues to the political stage. The party leadership furthermore has a fruitful relation with the Tatmadaw, as meetings with the military's senior general and consecutive implementation of demands confirm.

The chauvinist parts of the Burmese religious community are at the centre of distributing hostile rhetoric towards the Rohingya. The character of islamophobic rhetoric underwent a mild evolution. After initial suspicion of an intended Muslim conspiracy to conquer the country through economic control and population growth, the rhetoric quickly turned vulgar. It included allegations of rape, comparisons to animal behaviour and depictions of deracination through gruesome terrorists. Likewise, the strategy to disenfranchise Rohingya became more refined. Initial plans sought to boycott their business and to deprive them of sources of income, in order to disturb alleged plans of economic takeover. With Ma Ba Tha's involvement and the successful lobbying, disenfranchisement of Rohingya was further institutionalised through the exclusion of the ethnic group from political participation as well as the implementation of the laws restricting reproduction and marriage and conversion. After ARSA arrived on the scene, the alleged terrorist threat found a manifestation and state, monks and military readily portrayed their suggested measures, namely the "race and religion laws", an upgrade of security forces and clearance operations, as means to fight terrorism.

State support or indifference during the USPD tenure benefitted the expansion of religious nationalists. In the newly democratic environment, this facilitated the foundation of powerful religious associations such as 969 and Ma Ba Tha. The NLD seems more ambitious in containing hate speech and chauvinist actors. With Ma Ba Tha disempowered and a major share of Rohingya dispersed, it remains to be seen what direction anti-Muslim mobilisation might take. It is possible that all efforts will now be put into preventing an extensive repatriation of Rohingya. Since Myanmar's government seems to covertly approve a permanent resettlement of Rohingya, the relation with religious actors might eventually soothe. Then again, Ma Ba Tha intends to establish a party, indicating that they plan to contest the NLD in the following elections. If their estimated 10 million Ma Ba Tha members are not a fabrication, they will a substantial contester.

5.4 COMPARISON

From the standpoint of symbolic politics, the religious actors and Rakhine parties share some essential characteristics. Firstly, they emerged in the newly democratising country, benefitting from liberties and free media, but also playing a part in elite-competition and resulting politicisation of ethnic concerns. Secondly, in this environment, they make strong appeals to emotions in order to define a threatening out-group and strengthen coherence among the in-group. Thirdly, they portray their own group as threatened and argue for the containment, thus eventual domination over, the other group. Fourthly, they suggest and popularize predatory policies, which results from the previous argument for protection of the own group. Lastly, what sets them apart from actors from the central government is that they are the source of the anti-Muslim narrative.

Newly gained freedoms allowed monks to travel unobstructed and spread their narrative among the population. Additionally, monks benefitted greatly from a liberalisation of the media landscape and the expansion of social media. Changes in society furthermore saw increased involvement of clerics in politics, despite classical Buddhist doctrines that exclude monks from interfering with politics. Finally, traits of liberal democracy, such as freedom of assembly and associations, allowed the foundation of religious groups, such as 969 and Ma Ba Tha in the first place. Hence, the existence of opportunities as a precondition for the rise of predatory actors in ethnic conflict can be confirmed. Just like religious actors, Rakhine parties would most likely not exist if Myanmar had not politically liberalised. The democratic transition provided Rakhine politicians with the framework but also incentives to connect with chauvinistic Buddhists and the local population. Political competition in a democratic environment thus allowed for the founding and conceptualisation of parties like the RNDP and ANP. As democratisation facilitated the emergence of previously suppressed opinions, these parties quickly formed around the concerns of a particular ethnic group and in the following advocated its demands. The common enemy and perceived suppression unified a variety of actors in support of the parties' demands. The popularity of the Rakhine parties' demands, alliance with religious groups and nationwide prominence of Islamophobia put the central government under pressure. This confirms findings that democratisation facilitates the emergence of parties, which will use the ethnic card to gain the upper hand. Moreover, it demonstrates that in the context of open competition these ethnic politics can become the most prominent issue and force all other actors to react and take a stance. Just like the other political actors, the Rakhine parties' motivation is maximisation of influence and power. Choosing a stance as the guardian of Rakhine ethnics

therefore was a rational choice, as it successfully elevated the party to one of the three most influential forces in the national parliament in addition to making it the strongest party in Rakhine.

In order to achieve mobilisation, religious actors refer to primordial motives such as a supposed threat, conquer termination by "the other". Typically, they ascribe certain characteristic, such as the desire to take and impregnate women, to the antagonistic ethnicity, depicting it as "their nature". The references to this deracination are especially distinct among the religious actors. Wirathu includes animalistic metaphors, which are not only highly emotional, but also invoke an existential struggle against savage creatures, which do not possess human virtues and are driven by predatory instincts. Religious actors additionally make frequent use of references to past Buddhist kingdoms and Muslim uprisings in order to justify pre-emptive violence. By combining old animosities with new threats of expansion and terrorism, the chauvinist monks create a new myth-symbol complex that is not only exploited by them, but also by ambitious political actors. Chauvinist monks similarly define borders between ethnic groups under reference to myth-symbol complexes. Based on language and religion, Rohingya are identified as non-native Bengalis with expansionist intentions. The conflict over the territory is an important aspect in the Rakhine parties' narrative. Here, the political actors presume a right of Rakhine ethnics over the land, based on their ancestral ties. Eventually control over the territory is equated with survival of the "race". In cooperation with radical Buddhists, the siege-mentality was expanded with an alleged terrorist threat and Muslim conspiracy. Thus, the assumption of symbolic politics that politicians mainly refer to emotional appeals and define the security of their affiliated group in terms of domination or containment of the other holds true. The fact that religious actors were the first to create the hostile narrative confirms the assumption that a myth has to be existent before politicians can exploit it. Hereby they refer to historic instances of Muslim secessionism and a pre-existing conception that Rohingya are imported labourers or illegal immigrants. Both parties and monks, under strong emotional appeals, like the cessation of the race, take the struggle for group worth to an extreme. Exaggeration of the threat is a crucial component in this. Religious actors warn of a population growth of Muslims and relate this to their scheme to conquer Myanmar. This is indeed fearmongering as, according to official censuses, the percentage of Muslim population has increased by a mere 0.4 % from 3.9 percent in 1983[597] to 4.3% in 2014.[598]

---

[597] "Burma: 1983 Population Census," (Yangon: Immigration and Manpower Department Census Division, 1986)., 22.
[598] "The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census.", 26.

What further differentiates both actors is that, despite similar vilification of Muslims, the Rakhine intend to achieve an empowerment of Rakhine ethnics through more autonomy, while monks primarily aim for the protection of Buddhism in Rakhine and Myanmar as a whole. Religious actors take the situation of Rakhine ethnics as a warning. They assume that the region is the western gateway for ravenous Muslims, which will eradicate the Burmese Buddhists, if not restrained. In the case of Wirathu, religious inflammatory speech can be much more vulgar and emotionally charged than the one of Arakanese political actors.

Both actors are actively involved in designing and propagating predatory policies. The Parties have seen their demands of stripping Rohingya of the right to vote implemented and directly convinced the military to increase its presence in Rakhine state. Religious actors, have not only achieved occasional prosecution of dissidents and partial state backing for their boycotts, they have also been responsible for designing and the implementation of the "race and religion" laws. As mentioned previously, this confirms the assumption that symbolic politics and eventually leads to predatory policies. These policies are framed as motivated by security concerns. Their nature however suggests that security in these cases is achieved through domination over the others. The process of defining security as requiring dominance over the others makes these actors chauvinistic. If the actors are driven by greedy motives cannot be determined without doubt. The Rakhine political actors in the end strive for political power and possibility to advocate ethnic concerns on a national level. Monks, however, might not strive for individual worldly power, but the preservation of Buddhism as a vital part of Burmese society. If, in this case a modernising society and secularisation are a big threat cannot be said with certainty. Whether a Muslim threat is just a pretext born from rational calculation or indeed perceived as real remains to be proven.

Chauvinist monks furthermore fulfil the characteristics of the "cultural entrepreneur", who provides an interpretation of ethnic identity, which is then exploited by politicians. This is an essential part of symbolic politics. Myths, justifying hostilities, have to be existent before predatory elites exploit them. In Myanmar, these are found in the glorification of unity among its various ethnic groups, records of previous Mujahedeen movements or Muslim efforts for autonomy and eventually in the conceptualisation of Rohingya as Bengali immigrants. Religious actors are responsible for bringing up these themes and thus shaping the perception of "Bengalis" against their will. Their vilification of Muslims started after the 2012 Rakhine State violence. By that time, Rakhine parties had indeed portrayed the existential struggle of Rakhine ethnics, but the inclusion of the Muslim threat in their narrative was not yet common. But since then, Rakhine parties have equally enforced the narrative of invasive Bengali

immigrants or Muslim terrorists. Thus, they fulfil a hybrid role. Construction of an enemy other is a vital part of their modus operandi as ethnic parties. However, they simultaneously exploit the created myths.

Gerry van Klinken and Su Mon Thazin argue that religious actors acted as social brokers by connecting a small number of nationalists with religious concerns of a broad audience. Their major achievement was to create a network in which religious concerns were received by established (military) elites and then put into collective action. Taking into account that Rakhine parties actively sought to bring together all sorts of societal, political and religious actors, I add that Rakhine Parties took a similar position. Through conferences within Rakhine State, they connected local civil and religious actors with politicians. The results of the discussions often showed a convergence of the concerns of all actors and culminated in joint statements that were implemented in the political course and demands of the party. This is insofar important, as it created networks in which shared dissatisfactions could spread. Furthermore, it greatly increased the will to take collective action, by showing people on the ground, that their concerns are shared among each other and with political and religious elites.

CHAPTER VI: CONCLUSION

This thesis aimed to scrutinise the hostilities towards Rohingya during Myanmar's first democratic years of the 21st century. Counterintuitively, democratisation and the election of a human rights activist did not end long-standing discrimination of the Muslim minority. On the contrary, Myanmar experienced an increasingly hostile atmosphere that culminated in a military-induced campaign of ethnic cleansing. While large-n studies of ethnic conflict and an historical analysis help to understand the conditions under which hostilities could arise, an actor-based approach is most suitable to assess the particular mechanics of ethnic mobilisation that eventually facilitated and prolonged ethnic violence, discriminatory policies and military operations. In the case of Myanmar, political elites exploit ethnic tensions and a hostile narrative to create solidarity among one particular ethnic group and gain its favour. This is done through appeals to an emotionally charged narrative – a narrative that is in Myanmar chiefly created by chauvinist Buddhist actors under reference to a Muslim threat. This process is best described by the framework of symbolic politics. Before summing up the findings on symbolic politics, the following paragraphs will integrate the case of Myanmar into previously described findings of ethnic conflict.

In this research, it is presumed that language and social practices are tightly intertwined. Though it is possible that social practices affect the discourse, it is more likely that language, speech acts and written text initiate new routines, norms and practices. This research therefore focuses on the analysis of the discourse, mostly on the macro and meso level, in a defined period of time. Accordingly it aims to explain political change, in this case the increasingly institutionalised discrimination of Rohingya, through aligning it with an increasingly hostile narrative, which is forwarded through text and speech by certain actors. Naturally, the narrative alone does not constitute discrimination. It is furthermore how the narrative is shaped by the socio-political events and eventually becomes the driving force in increasingly hostile policies and practices. Nevertheless it has to be analysed in reference to social and political developments. Since this research aims to explain the causalities, leading up to a certain event (from a suspected Muslim conspiracy to directed expulsion) it is located in the research approaches of discourse analysis and process tracing. as it treats the discourse as a vital element in the process leading to a given outcome.

From the multitude of research on internal conflict, ethnic conflict and civil war, almost all findings apply to Myanmar. It is thus no surprise that the country has seen ongoing internal

conflict involving various groups for decades. A variety of ethnic groups is never a sufficient explanation for the outbreak of a conflict. Other structural factors have to be taken into account to find the underlying reasons for conflict. The first assumption here is that opportunities for ethnic insurgency must be present. These can be caused by a country's topography, resources, capability of state institutions, history or a recent change in the political system. Secondly, mobilisation along ethnic lines occurs prior to conflict. This implies that certain actors, pursuing a rational strategy to maximise power or wealth, expect a benefit from convincing people into collective action against a presumably "hostile other". This presupposes that a scapegoat or enemy already exists, or that an image of such is deliberately created. The creation of such an enemy "other" is through a reinterpretation of historical narratives and contemporary events, which is used to create a shared identity and coherence among the in-group and identify and derogate the out-group. The former, opportunities for ethnic conflict, can easily assessed through a look at the country's history, recent political development and topography. The latter has to be assessed through discourse analysis or interviews among a target demography. In the following, opportunities for conflict in Myanmar will be summed up before elaborating on the exploitation of ethnicity and the framework of symbolic politics.

The British colonial rule had a significant influence on character of Myanmar's internal conflicts. The import of labourers and administrative personnel from British India laid the foundation for conflict along ethnic lines, as it disfavoured the native Burmese people, whose dissatisfaction turned into xenophobia and nationalist movements. Moreover, it also created the background for the contemporary denunciations of Rohingya as Bengali immigrants. After a short-lived federal union, in which ethnic identities solidified through the promise of self-administration for ethnic states, the military founded a one-party state and tried to enforce unity and a centralised administration within Myanmar. Due to its self-imposed isolation, the country remained underdeveloped for decades – a legacy, which still troubles it today. As such, the state has failed as the economic promises of a postcolonial development. Areas of ethnic minorities were widely left to their own fortune, while the military tried to siphon the revenues of local natural resources. Consequently, pre-existing grievances were amplified through dissatisfaction about economic conditions, oppression and exploitation. Previous research shows, that especially economic inequalities in combination with political oppression lead to uprisings. Thus, it is no surprise that, after hopes for a federal union, the centralised military state was met with resistance by ethnic minorities.

During that time, citizenship in Myanmar became increasingly dependent on membership in one of the "national races". However, during the military rule and despite

exclusion from the national races, Rohingya were not as discriminated and forcefully displaced as they are today. The junta indeed made use of narrative of Bengali immigrants, launched attacks and imposed discriminatory citizenship laws, but disenfranchisement and expulsion of Rohingya peaked in the 21st century. This suggests that historic analysis is capable of explaining the context to the conflict, but it cannot explain why and how the conflict escalated at this particular time. In order to approach this question, I suppose to turn the attention to structural conditions in Myanmar under special attention to which factors urge actors to mobilise along ethnic lines.

The initial assumption here is, according to the feasibility hypothesis, that when a conflict is possible, it will emerge. Among the decisive factors that favour an emergence of conflict are inaccessible terrain, possible resource revenue and weak state institutions. In this environment, rational elites will exploit economic grievances, religious hatred or discrimination in order to maximise their wealth and influence. Without doubt, Myanmar fulfils the criteria of such a state, which lacks political institutions to accommodate ethnic grievances, has inaccessible terrain and provides possible revenues from gas, oil, timber, narcotics or mining. In fact, all these criteria apply to Rakhine state, especially now that new gas pipelines run from Rakhine's coast towards China. Accordingly, it was predictable that the region would experience insurgency or violence. Like most of Myanmar's peripheral regions, Rakhine has had armed resistance during the military dictatorship. But none of the groups was able to maintain a significant rebellion. Added to the already precarious situation in the state is dissatisfaction on behalf of the local Rakhine population. They complain vehemently about unequal access to political decision-making and an ongoing exclusion from the profits of local resource exploitation. It is exactly these grievances that give birth to ethnic outbidding where one group tries to secure its dominance.

The exploitation of ethnic grievances presupposed that identities are socially constructed. Identities or characteristics of ethnic groups are not hereditary or tied to blood and land, nor are hostilities between groups anchored in their genes, although manipulative actors like to appeal to these concepts. It is rather a deliberate manipulation of these issues that bring up perceptions of fear or hatred. As this is an elite-driven process, another condition has to be fulfilled. There must be an opportunity and incentive for predatory elites to mobilise. This is provided by the democratisation of the country. In previous studies, democratisation was linked to the emergence of ethnic conflict as it creates the exact opportunities for elite mobilisation. With newly gained freedoms of press, assembly speech and political association, but chronic lack of state-oversight and regulation, a new democracy creates the playing field for elites to

compete. In the case of Myanmar, the democratisation was a crucial process that led to instances of communal violence in Rakhine and the final displacement of a majority of Rohingya. In a competitive environment, leading elites exploited and deepened pre-existing ethnic cleavages and discontent. To go full circle, these grievances are historically grown through Myanmar's colonial history, federal period and military dictatorship, but only during the country's democratisation, they became a decisive driver in the ethnic conflict in Myanmar.

Finally, it has to be taken into account, that all the aforementioned dynamics were developed to analyse or understand ethnic conflict and civil war. These conflicts are usually characterised by clashes between to almost equally powerful ethnic groups or the uprising of ethnic groups against a discriminatory state. Unlike other ethnic insurgencies in Myanmar, hostilities against Rohingya are better characterised as communal violence, state discrimination and eventually ethnic cleansing. As Mann pointed out, ethnic cleansing is a modern phenomenon that occurs in fractionalised, democratising countries, when ethnicity trumps class as main characteristic of identification. Especially his assumption that the stronger side will act when it believes it has the military and ideological legitimacy to enact a cleansing apply to the recent hostilities towards Rohingya. To answer the question how this ideological superiority is created within a democratising country, how the out-group is alienated to an extend that extreme violence is justified; a framework that merges the findings of analysis of ethnic conflict and the social construction of identity has to be applied.

This bridge is built by symbolic politics. Although its core assumptions were not specifically developed with this kind of asymmetrical ethnic conflict in mind, they still apply to the case of Rohingya-Buddhist tensions and allow to gain a comprehensive overview over the conflict. Symbolic politics combines all of the aforementioned mechanisms. The starting point is the myth-symbol complex, which is inherent in every societal group. These ties of language, religion, culture, values and history, *perceived* as hereditary, create a national or ethnic identity but also serve to identify outsiders. Through emotional appeals to this complex, predatory elites exploit ethnic differences for their own merit. This takes places in a competitive environment, facilitated by democratisation, in which the actors rationally choose to appeal to emotionally charged myths to maximise their gains. In this case, myths are operationalised as expressions that define another group as inferior or as an enemy. The threat of the projected enemy is exaggerated, which eventually culminates in predatory policies. As described above, these acts will be especially prominent in democratising states. Lastly, symbolic politics assumes that a mythology has to exist *before* politicians can exploit it. Thus, a "cultural entrepreneur" has to be responsible for reinterpreting cultures, myths and identities.

Taking symbolic politics as the framework contains the assumption that the conflict is perpetuated by certain actors. This leads us to the core of this thesis. The actors involved in creating and spreading the anti-Muslim narrative in Myanmar. In order to assess if elites in Myanmar behaved as described through symbolic politics, this thesis analysed speech acts of actors of the central government and crucial actors in Rakhine state and set them in relation to political and societal developments in the country. Decisive on the level of the central government are the Tatmadaw, the USDP, the NLD and their respective leaders Min Aung Hlaing, Thein Sein and Aung San Suu Kyi. On the local level are the Rakhine parties and so called "firebrand monks", headed by Ashin Wirathu.

All of these actors pursued a rational strategy, in which mobilisation along ethnic lines benefitted the consolidation and maximisation of political power. The democratic system dragged the political actors into a competitive situation, where siding with the Bamar-Buddhist majority became a crucial element in gaining the upper hand. Democratisation furthermore introduced civil liberties, which allowed a faster and unmonitored distribution of derogatory narratives. Especially the defamatory monkhood immensely benefitted from freedom of speech and assembly as well as media freedom and the take-off of social media within Myanmar. In this sense, the political liberalisation has a multi-faceted role, as it facilitated the aspirations of previously powerless actors to become relevant leading to increasing elite-competition, while simultaneously creating opportunities for competition in an environment of limited regulation.

In this context, actors from the Tatmadaw, central government and local Rakhine parties, all referred to existing an existing myth-symbol complex. The central elements of this are the adherence to an ethnic nationalism, which takes membership in one of the government-defined "national races" or "ethnic nationalities" as a precondition for the granting of citizenship. This concept additionally involves the labelling of Rohingya as Bengali immigrants, which is the foundation for statements that argue in favour of their exclusion and relocation. The denouncing of Rohingya became significantly harsher over time. Initially deemed as imported labourers or immigrants, the allegations of a threat to national unity and development through illegal labour increased after the 2012 communal violence. With the raids of ARSA, the interpretation of Muslim identity was unilaterally enriched with an alleged jihadist, terrorist threat. The political actors varied in terms of their emotional appeals and implemented policies.

The USDP and Thein Sein adhered to the narrative of "Bengali immigrants", which was already prominent during previous military rule. The perception of Rohingya as illegal immigrants culminated in suggestions of ethnic separation and deportation. The USDP

personnel, de facto, climbed on the bandwagon of arising Islamophobia after incidents of communal violence in 2012. Facing electoral defeat against the NLD, the USDP tried to gain voters among the concerned Burmese Buddhists and entered a concealed alliance with religious agitators. Eventually, the USDP-patronage allowed the influential 969 movement to form Ma Ba Tha, which directly lobbied the government and achieved the implementation of discriminatory policies against the Rohingya. This became especially obvious in the run-up for the 2015 elections, where the USDP, for the first time confronted with electoral loss, implemented discriminatory measures to "contain" the Muslim population – measures that were previously advocated by chauvinist monks and nationalist Rakhine politicians.

The NLD and Aung San Suu Kyi, in the following, stood out through talking down the misery of Rohingya while simultaneously pointing out that Rakhine Buddhist acted out of fear and were equal victims as Rohingya. As it confirmed the concerns of frightened Buddhists, the party later adopted the narrative of Muslim terrorism in Myanmar. It is obvious that the incumbent state counsellor is bound by the forces of the Buddhist majority voters and the prevailing military. With her eyes on the next election and promise to advance peace and stability in the country, she has no benefit from antagonising these forces, except restoring her international reputation. This leaves her little choice for anything else but waiting for the storm to blow over, while taking half-hearted measures to appease the international outrage. In the end, the local population takes its will to the ballot box, and not the international community.

The NLD thus failed to take responsibility of find ways to criticise the military or hold it to accountable for misconduct. As a result, the military, confirmed in its previous course, was able to carry out a campaign of ethnic cleansing that reached its peak in 2017. Two accompanying explanations for this conduct are found within the framework of democratisation. Firstly, as an organ of a democratic government with granted representation in government institutions, the Tatmadaw has now a need to ensure a positive public image in order to maintain its secured access to policy-making. Thus, through a campaign against a perceived threat to Buddhism, they can expect to win the favour of the Burmese population. Secondly, the military is still deeply involved in Myanmar's key industries. In the light of market liberalisation, it is reasonable that the armed forces secure the access to Rakhine's natural resources by dispersing its unwanted inhabitants and asserting dominance over the territory. There is every indication that the military aims to secure dominance over the region. In order to protect the border or to access the resources, it has now begun construction of facilities on land previously inhabited

by Rohingya and ramped up its efforts to retaliate assaults of the Northern Alliance in northern Rakhine.[599]

In his statements, the military's senior general, under reference to historic instances, carved out a narrative of a mythological harmony between Myanmar's ethnic groups, to which Rohingya "immigrants" are a substantial threat. In various statements, the military has justified its actions in Rakhine State as counter-terrorist measures. If the retaliation campaign is part of a planned campaign or a spontaneous reaction to terrorist attacks remains debatable. Indications of preparation, relocation of manpower, systematic destruction and continuous presence of armed forces, however, suggests that permanent relocation of Rohingya was intended and ARSA attacks were welcomed as a triggering event and justification.

These actors' behaviour confirm the mechanisms of symbolic politics in Myanmar's conflict between Rohingya and Buddhists. The precondition that a group mythology, which justifies hostilities, must exist before political actors can exploit it, it confirmed by the perception of "Bengali immigrants" that is attributed to Rohingya. This narrative is evident in Myanmar's postcolonial history and has led to previous suspicions towards Rohingya and Muslim struggles for autonomy. This narrative eventually lead to predatory policies that were deemed as required to ensure the security of the own group. Chauvinist actors have increasingly enriched this narrative with a Muslim threat to Myanmar's Buddhist population and allegations of terrorist and jihadist intentions.

Buddhist monks are the driving force of reinterpretation of identity and vilification of Muslims. Their behaviour fits the role of cultural entrepreneurs that create myths before political actors can exploit them. Monks, like Wirathu were the first to frame the initial communal violence as an existential fight between Muslims and Buddhists and later increased the hostile attitude towards Rohingya through allegations of Muslim rapists and conspiracy to take possession of Rakhine state. Their appeals are extremely emotional and evoke an existential struggle by referring to animalistic metaphors and a predatory character of Muslims, which is allegedly ingrained in their blood. This linkage of certain characteristics to an ethnic group as a whole makes their statements primordial in nature. Monks were furthermore the first to add the notion of a terrorist or jihadist threat, which occurred even before ARSA had launched its first attacks in 2016. These fears were sustained by terrorist operations in the Middle East and Myanmar's neighbouring countries as well as by the expansion of the Islamic

---

[599] Lawi Weng, "Stop 'War Crimes' in Rakhine or We'll Join the Fight There, Tnla Tells Tatmadaw," The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/stop-war-crimes-rakhine-well-join-fight-tnla-tells-tatmadaw.html.

State. Being a major source of ideological and spiritual guidance in Myanmar, monks wield great traditional and often charismatic authority and thus have a great potential to provoke collective action. Reports show that areas, in which communal tensions has occurred, had previously experienced sermons by nationalist monks. Consequently, the monk's narrative and emotional appeal are a direct premise for hostilities, but also crucial in creating a hostile atmosphere in which political actors could exploit ethnic tensions and propagate predatory policies in order to gain voter-support.

From the perspective of symbolic politics, local Rakhine Parties take a hybrid-role. On the one hand, they are a product of the historic negligence of Rakhine ethnics and the newly formed democratic system. Not bound by political regulation or a consociational democracy, the exclusive representation and protection of ethnic Rakhine became their main concern and competitive advantage. Their main concern of protecting Rakhine and its inhabitants is based on the perceived oppression of the local population. The parties therefore exploit ethnic tensions and the fear of a hostile other in order to maximise their support base. But on the other hand, they are also crucially involved in shaping the narrative of a "Muslim threat". Initially, the parties criticised the exploitation of Rakhine trough the central government and military, which was already framed as a threat to the existence of Rakhine ethnics. Later on, the threat posed by an expansive Islam was added, portraying ethnic Rakhine as under siege on two fronts. In this context, political actors in Rakhine identify the "foreignness" of Rohingya based on their language and attribute a malicious intent universally to all members of the ethnic group. Remarkably, this notion was added after Buddhist monks interpreted events of communal violence through the prism of religious rivalries. Siding with religious actors, the NLD and the armed forces, Rakhine politicians have added the notion of a terrorist threat, which is maintained even after ARSA has been repelled and a majority of Rohingya has been disowned and dispersed. In order to mobilise the locals, Rakhine parties have extensively used emotional appeals to strengthen primordial sentiments of fraternity and blood ties among the Rakhine people. Their course of "Rakhine first" brought them great popularity among the Rakhine people and elevated them to the strongest party in the local parliament and the third-strongest party on a national level. They furthermore act as social brokers by successfully connecting the local population and religious actors and implement their concerns into their political program. This endowed the parties with a great potential to mobilise and the ability to forward the demands of protection of Rakhine to the central government and the military.

Ultimately, the hostilities against Rohingya have been facilitated and prolonged through an emotionally charged climate and hostile narrative, to which all actors contributed to differing

degrees. This creation of a "hostile other" is often times a harbinger of intrastate conflict. It is crucial, as no one is willing to fight against compatriots. Yugoslavia, Rwanda or Sudan are examples on how ethnicity is exploited to separate populations and ignite conflict when shared citizenship as a uniting factor fails. These cases also outline that ethnic outbidding occurs when state authorities are absent or incapable and/or when elites are challenged or in open competition. Even interstate warfare requires the construction of an enemy to bolster the people's "war readiness". Russia's annexation of Crimea is justified by claiming a need to protect local people who identify as Russian from extremists and protect their right for self-determination. The "War on Terror", Afghanistan War and Iraq War are founded on a, to a great degree fabricated, story of a threatening force in the Middle East. Purposeful propaganda and manipulation by elites appeared in all cases. In the case of Myanmar, this propaganda gradually increased the concerns about a Muslim threat.

The vilification of Muslims is a necessary precondition for discrimination and hostilities against Rohingya. And as the anti-Rohingya narrative underwent a transition during the past years, the line of action has shifted as well. Driven by religious actors and exploited by politics, the impression of Rohingya morphed from illegal Bengali immigrants to conspiring Muslims to jihadist terrorists. Accordingly, early means of "self-defence" revolved boycotting Muslim business and enforcing the citizenship laws. As the Rohingya were increasingly portrayed as an issue of national security, political actors stripped Rohingya of voting rights and implemented the "race and religion protection laws" to directly contain Rohingya population growth. These actions confirm the assumption of symbolic politics, that eventually security of the own group will be provided through domination of "the other". Eventually, after noticeable securitisation of an alleged Rohinya terrorist plot, the strategy around ethnic tensions in Rakhine was designed around a security threat. Thus, in absence of a political approach, security in Rakhine state was
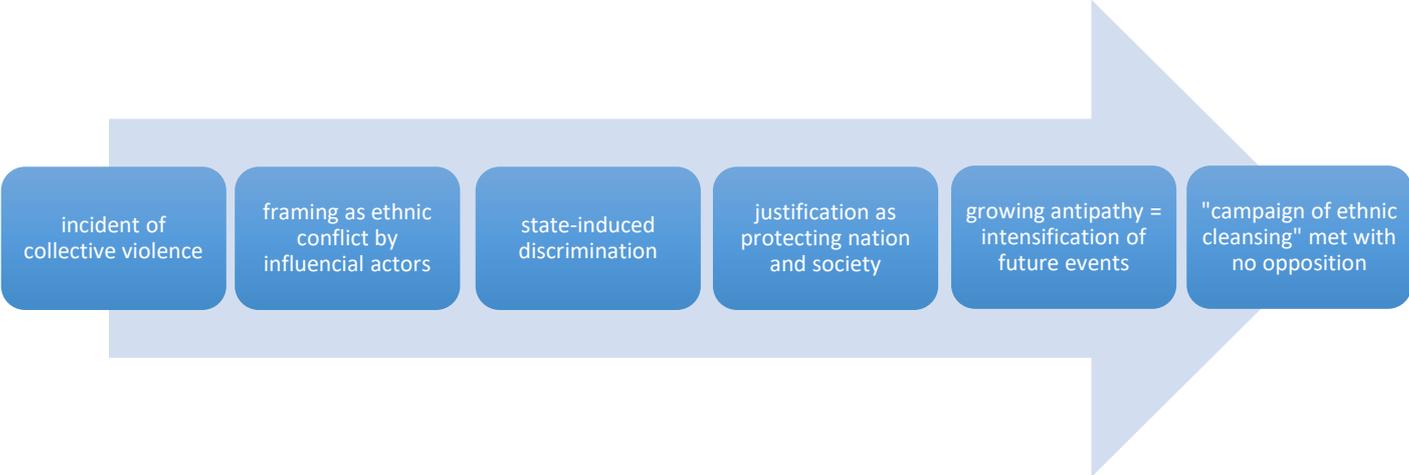

FIGURE 5 - PROCESS LEADING TO SEVERE EXPULSION

ramped up through a greater military presence and an final campaign of ethnic cleansing (four cuts), designed to eliminate the terrorist threat/support base. If the design of this campaign is a direct result of growing Islamophobia remains to be proven, yet in any case, the aversions created an atmosphere in which a campaign of this extend didn't meet sufficient resistance, neither by leading politicians, nor by a majority of the population (see Fig. 5).

Myanmar was at a crossroads when the NLD got elected. People still had memories of peaceful coexistence, yet studies showed that especially Rakhine people proofed less trusting and unwilling to interact with or trust Muslims or even engage in mutual trust-building activities.[600] The NLD failed to step in and work towards a reversion of rejection Muslims. If a reconciliation had been possible at this point is now secondary. The more pressing issue is now to find a long-term solution and provide the grounds for a successful reconciliation. The government has initiated some efforts to tackle hate speech and contain religious firebrands, but verbal hostilities remain present, especially on social media. However, a will to provide a sustainable solution is absent, especially as the topic is a taboo in the preparations for the upcoming elections. Suu Kyi's government has mostly overlooked recommendations of international organisations and has left the chances for a Rohingya repatriation and integration in the Burmese society worse than ever. Admittedly, a forced repatriation has been launched by the Chinese government. Nonetheless, because Myanmar does not credibly ensure a safe return, Rohingya are unwilling to return under the current conditions. Most importantly, Rohingya settlements have been systematically destroyed and partially occupied by military facilities or Buddhist model-villages, confining possible returnees to a life in IDP camps or segregated communities. Upon arrival, they would be still faced with expropriation, an entrenched aversion and discrimination. So a great majority prefers to remain in refugee camps in Bangladesh. Additionally, state-facilities to repatriate refugees are underdeveloped and would need years, if not decades, to process an official and orderly repatriation. On top of that, new tensions between the Arakan Army and the Tatmadaw, affecting civilians in Rakhine's north, has caused remaining Rohingya to flee the country. In total, the number of refugees since 2018 is far greater than the number of returnees. It remains to be seen if after the 2020 election more serious efforts will be made. But all signals point towards an NLD-win with considerable reinvigoration of the USDP/military opposition. Thus we can expect more internal quarrels and a hand tame NLD that will prioritize the peace process, relations with the army, efforts towards a federal union

---

[600] Center For Diversity and National Harmony, "Rakhine State Needs Assessment," (Yangon: Center For Diversity and National Harmony, 2015)., 141-169.

and alteration of the constitution over vouching for Muslims or working towards the integration of Rohingya Muslims into the concept of the Burmese multi-ethnic nation.

BIBILIOGRAPHY

"66(D): No Real Change: An Analysis of Complaints Made before and after the 2017 Legal Amendment." Free Expression Myanmar, 2017.

"The 2014 Myanmar Population and Housing Census." In *Census Atlas Myanmar*: Department of Population; Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population, 2014.

Abuza, Zachary. "Myanmar's Tatmadaw and the Making of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army ". *Terrorism Monitor*, no. 10 (2017): 7-12.

Al Hussein, Zeid Ra'ad. "Darker and More Dangerous: High Commissioner Updates the Human Rights Council on Human Rights Issues in 40 Countries." United Nations Human Rights Office Of The High Commissioner, https://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=22041&LangID=E. (accessed August 27, 2018).

Allchin, Joseph. "The Rohingya, Myths and Misinformation." Democratic Voice of Burma, http://www.dvb.no/analysis/the-rohingya-myths-and-misinformation/22597. (accessed October 26, 2018).

———. "Taste of Democracy Sends Burma's Fragile Economy into Freefall." Independent Print Limited, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/taste-of-democracy-sends-burmas-fragile-economy-into-freefall-2357511.html. (accessed January 14, 2019).

Amnesty International. "Myanmar: Aung San Suu Kyi "Burying Her Head in the Sand" About Rakhine Horrors." Amnesty International, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/09/myanmar-aung-san-suu-kyi-burying-her-head-in-the-sand-about-rakhine-horrors/. (accessed August 27, 2018).

———. "Myanmar: Military Land Grab as Security Forces Build Bases on Torched Rohingya Villages " Amnesty International, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2018/03/myanmar-military-land-grab-as-security-forces-build-bases-on-torched-rohingya-villages/. (accessed October 16, 2018).

———. "Myanmar: Scorched-Earth Campaign Fuels Ethnic Cleansing of Rohingya from Rakhine State." Amnesty International, https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/09/myanmar-scorched-earth-campaign-fuels-ethnic-cleansing-of-rohingya-from-rakhine-state/. (accessed May 23, 2018).

Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* Verso London, 2004.

"Anp Vice Chair Delivers Address at 21st Century Panglong 3rd Session." *The Global New Light of Myanmar*, 07.12 2018, 6,14.

Article 19. "Myanmar: Interfaith Harmonious Coexistence Bill (3rd Version)." In *Legal Analysis*. London: Article 19, 2017.

Asean Statistical Yearbook 2018. Jakarta: ASEAN Secretariat, 2018.

Asia News. "Burmese Buddhists against Qatar Mobile Phone Company: "Boycott Muslims"." AsiaNews.it, http://www.asianews.it/news-en/Burmese-Buddhists-against-Qatar-mobile-phone-company:-Boycott-Muslims-31271.html. (accessed November 3, 2018).

"Assessment of Media Development in Myanmar: Based on Unesco's Media Development Indicators." In *The International Programme for the Development of Communication*. Bangkok: UNESCO Office Bangkok and Regional Bureau for Education in Asia and the Pacific; International Media Support (Denmark), 2016.

Aung, San Yamin. "Seven Charged with Illegal Assembly after Us Embassy Protest." The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/seven-charged-with-illegal-assembly-after-us-embassy-protest.html. (accessed November 11, 2018).

Bächthold, Stefan. "An Eclipse of Myanmar's Civil Society?" Heinrich Böll Stiftung, https://www.boell.de/en/2017/07/05/eclipse-myanmars-civil-society. (accessed January 28, 2019).

"Bangladesh and Burma: The Rohingya Crisis." House of Commons, International Development Committee, 2018.

Barany, Zoltan. "Burma: Suu Kyi's Missteps." *Journal of Democracy* 29, no. 1 (2018): 5-19.

Barron, Laignee. "Nationalist Monk Known as the 'Burmese Bin Laden' Has Been Stopped from Spreading Hate on Facebook." Time Magazine, http://time.com/5178790/facebook-removes-wirathu/. (accessed November 3, 2018).

BBC News. "Burma's Suu Kyi Urges Minority Rights." BBC, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-18979410. (accessed August 22, 2018).

———. "Myanmar: Aung San Suu Kyi Exclusive Interview." BBC News, 2017.

Beissinger, Mark R. "A New Look at Ethnicity and Democratization." *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 3 (2008): 85-97.

Belford, Aubrey. "As Myanmar's Rakhine Buddhists Gain Strength, So Does Anti-Muslim Apartheid." Reuters. (accessed February 22, 2019).

"Beyond Panglong: Myanmar's National Peace and Reform Dilemma." In *Myanmar Policy Briefing*. Amsterdam: The Transnational Institute, 2017.

Birsel, Robert. "Al Qaeda Warns Myanmar of 'Punishment' over Rohingya." Reuters, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-alqaeda/al-qaeda-warns-myanmar-of-punishment-over-rohingya-idUSKCN1BO0NI. (accessed November 16, 2018).

Blanton, Robert, T David Mason, and Brian Athow. "Colonial Style and Post-Colonial Ethnic Conflict in Africa." *Journal of Peace Research* 38, no. 4 (2001): 473-91.

"Briefing by Security Council Mission to Bangladesh and Myanmar." New York: United Nations Security Council, 2018.

"Buddhism and State Power in Myanmar." In *Asia Report No. 290*, edited by International Crisis Group (ICG). Brussels: International Crisis Group (ICG), 2017.

Buncombe, Andrew. "With 'Rohingya' Not an Option on Census Forms, Burma's New Democracy Is Facing an Identity Crisis." The Independent https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/with-rohingya-not-an-option-on-census-forms-burma-s-new-democracy-is-facing-an-identity-crisis-9232505.html. (accessed November 11, 2018).

Bünte, Marco. "Perilous Presidentialism or Precarious Power-Sharing? Hybrid Regime Dynamics in Myanmar." *Contemporary Politics* 24, no. 3 (2018): 346-60.

Burke, Adam. "New Political Space, Old Tensions: History, Identity and Violence in Rakhine State, Myanmar." *Contemporary Southeast Asia: A Journal of International and Strategic Affairs* 38, no. 2 (2016): 258-83.

"Burma 2015 Human Rights Report." In *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices for 2015*, edited by Human Rights and Labor Bureau of Democracy: United States Department of State, 2015.

"Burma: 1983 Population Census." Yangon: Immigration and Manpower Department Census Division, 1986.

"Caf World Giving Index 2017." London: Charities Aid Foundation, 2016.

"Caged without a Roof. Apartheid in Myanmar's Rakhine State." London: Amnesty International, 2017.

Cameroon Intelligence Report. "Kofi Annan on a Fact-Finding Mission in Myanmar." http://www.cameroonintelligencereport.com/kofi-annan-on-a-fact-finding-mission-in-myanmar/. (accessed August 25, 2018).

Carroll, Joshua. "Myanmar's Brutal Military Is Convicting Its Own Soldiers of Atrocities." Foreign Policy, https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/06/27/myanmars-brutal-military-is-convicting-its-own-soldiers-of-war-crimes/. (accessed December 22, 2018).

Cederman, Lars-Erik, Simon Hug, and Lutz F Krebs. "Democratization and Civil War: Empirical Evidence." *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 4 (2010): 377-94.

Cederman, Lars-Erik, Nils B Weidmann, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch. "Horizontal Inequalities and Ethnonationalist Civil War: A Global Comparison." *American Political Science Review* 105, no. 3 (2011): 478-95.

Center For Diversity and National Harmony. "Rakhine State Needs Assessment." Yangon: Center For Diversity and National Harmony, 2015.

Chan, Aye. "The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) State of Burma (Myanmar)." *SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research* 3, no. 2 (2005): 396-420.

Cheesman, Nick. "How in Myanmar "National Races" Came to Surpass Citizenship and Exclude Rohingya." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 47, no. 3 (2017a): 461-83.

———. "Introduction: Interpreting Communal Violence in Myanmar." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 47, no. 3 (2017b): 335-52.

Chern, Kang Wan, and Htin Lynn Aung. "Daw Suu Pitches Myanmar to Asean, Vows to Improve Business Environment." The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/news/daw-suu-pitches-myanmar-asean-vows-improve-business-environment.html. (accessed January 27, 2019).

Clapp, Priscilla A. *Securing a Democratic Future for Myanmar.* Council on Foreign Relations Press, 2016.

Coclanis, Perter A. "Aung San Suu Kyi Is a Politician, Not a Monster." Foreign Policy, https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/05/14/aung-san-suu-kyi-is-a-politician-not-a-monster/. (accessed June 26, 2018).

———. "Terror in Burma: Buddhists Vs. Muslims." World Affairs Institute, http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org/article/terror-burma-buddhists-vs-muslims. (accessed October 19, 2018).

Collier, Paul, and Anke Hoeffler. "Greed and Grievance in Civil War." *Oxford economic papers* 56, no. 4 (2004): 563-95.

Collier, Paul, Anke Hoeffler, and Dominic Rohner. "Beyond Greed and Grievance: Feasibility and Civil War." *oxford Economic papers* 61, no. 1 (2009): 1-27.

"Conflict Analysis." Chap. 2 In *Conflict-Sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peace Building: Tools for Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment*, edited by Colin Roth. London, 2004.

"Constitution of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar." Yangon: Ministry of Information, 2008.

Crouch, Melissa. "Democracy and Peace Frustrated in Myanmar: Remembering U Ko Ni." Lowy Institute (The Interpreter), https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/democracy-and-peace-frustrated-myanmar-remembering-u-ko-ni. (accessed August 25, 2018).

———. "The Twisted Politics of Terrorism in Myanmar." Lowy Institute, https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/threat-terrorism-too-convenient-myanma. (accessed August 25, 2018).

"The Dark Side of Transition: Violence against Muslims in Myanmar." In *Asia Report*. Yangon/Jakarta/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2013.

Domínguez, Gabriel. "Hrw Slams Myanmar's Rohingya Plan as a 'Blueprint for Segregation'." Deutsche Welle, https://www.dw.com/en/hrw-slams-myanmars-rohingya-plan-as-a-blueprint-for-segregation/a-17972391. (accessed July 24, 2018).

East-West Center. "Aung San Suu Kyi." vimeo.com, 2013.

Egreteau, Renaud. "The Continuing Political Salience of the Military in Post-Spdc Myanmar." *Debating democratization in Myanmar* 233 (2014): 259.

———. "Military Guardianship and the Search for a Pacted Transition." In *Caretaking Democratization: The Military and Political Change in Myanmar*, 19-39. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

———. "Patterns of Persistent Praetorian Behaviour." In *Caretaking Democratization: The Military and Political Change in Myanmar*, 81-99. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

Eleven Media Group. "Myanmar (Burma) - Exclusive Interview with the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Min Aung Hlaing." Asia News Monitor, https://search.proquest.com/docview/1657330747?accountid=10067. . (accessed March 3, 2019).

———. "Rnp Issues Statement on Use of 'Muslim Community in Rakhine State'." Eleven Media Group, http://www.elevenmyanmar.com/local/5225. (accessed September 16, 2018).

Emmers, Ralf. "Securitization." Chap. 10 In *Contemporary Security Studies*, edited by Alan Collins, 131-46. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013.

"Eu-Myanmar Relations." In *Factsheets*. Bruxelles: European External Action Service, 2018.

"Examples of Anti-Muslim Propaganda." In *Burma Briefing*. London: Burma Campaign UK for Human Rights, Democracy & Development in Burma, 2013.

Facebook. "Removing Myanmar Military Officials from Facebook." Facebook, https://newsroom.fb.com/news/2018/08/removing-myanmar-officials/. (accessed November 3, 2018).

Fearon, James D, and David D Laitin. "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War." *American political science review* 97, no. 1 (2003): 75-90.

———. "Violence and the Social Construction of Ethnic Identity." *International organization* 54, no. 4 (2000): 845-77.

Ferrie, Jared, and Min Zayar Oo. "Myanmar Buddhist Committee Bans Anti-Muslim Organisations." Reuters, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-buddhism/myanmar-buddhist-committee-bans-anti-muslim-organizations-idUSBRE98A0EP20130911. (accessed November 6, 2018).

"Final Report of Inquiry Commission on Sectarian Violence in Rakhine State." edited by Myo Myint: Republic of the Union of Myanmar, 2013.

Fink, Christina. "Myanmar in 2017: Insecurity and Violence." *Asian Survey* 58, no. 1 (2018): 158-65.

Finnbogason, Daniel, and Isak Svensson. "The Missing Jihad. Why Have There Been No Jihadist Civil Wars in Southeast Asia?". *The Pacific Review* 31, no. 1 (2018/01/02 2018): 96-115.

Finney, Richard. "'Bengalis' Not Native to Myanmar, Country's Military Chief Says." Radio Free Asia, https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/bengalis-10122017191055.html/. (accessed February 24, 2019).

Fisher, Jonah. "Bbc News Channel "Our World" Myanmar's Extremist Monk." Youtube, 2013.

"Foreign Minister Kono Visits Myanmar." news release., 8.6., 2018.

Fortify Rights. "Myanmar: Implement Recommendations of Kofi Annan-Led Commission." Reliefweb.int, https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-implement-recommendations-kofi-annan-led-commission. (accessed August 25, 2018).

Freeman, Joe. "Can Anyone Stop Burma's Hardline Buddhist Monks." The Atlantic, https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2017/09/can-anyone-stop-burmas-hardline-buddhist-monks/538992/. (accessed December 12, 2018).

Frydenlund, Iselin. "The Birth of Buddhist Politics of Religious Freedom in Myanmar." *Journal of Religious and Political Practice* 4, no. 1 (2018): 107-21.

———. "Religious Liberty for Whom? The Buddhist Politics of Religious Freedom During Myanmar's Transition to Democracy." *Nordic Journal of Human Rights* 35, no. 1 (2017/01/02 2017): 55-73.

Fuller, Paul. "The Act of Giving: What Makes Myanmar So Charitable?" The Myanmar times, https://www.mmtimes.com/lifestyle/16317-the-act-of-giving-what-makes-myanmar-so-charitable.html. (accessed February 9, 2019).

Fuller, Thomas. "Extremism Rises among Myanmar Buddhists." The New York Times, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/21/world/asia/extremism-rises-among-myanmar-buddhists-wary-of-muslim-minority.html?hp&pagewanted=all. (accessed September 19, 2018.).

Galache, Carlos Sardiña. "Rohingya and National Identities in Burma." Australian National University, http://www.newmandala.org/the-rohingya-and-national-identities-in-burma/. (accessed April 1, 2018).

———. "Who Are the Monks Behind Burma's 969 Campaign?" Democratic Voice of Burma, http://www.dvb.no/news/features-news/the-monks-behind-burma%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%9C969%E2%80%9Dmovement-2/28079. (accessed October 17, 2018).

Ganesan, N. "Democratization and Its Implications for the Resolution of Ethnic Conflict in Myanmar." The Institute for Peace and Unification Studies, Seoul National University, 2017.

Gearan, Anne. "Burma's Thein Sein Says Military 'Will Always Have a Special Place' in Government." The Washington Post, https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/burmas-

thein-sein-says-military-will-always-have-a-special-place-in-government/2013/05/19/253c300e-c0d4-11e2-8bd8-2788030e6b44_story.html?noredirect=on&utm_term=.3651a3415e2a. (accessed October 11, 2018).

Gil, Sylwia. "The Role of Monkhood in Contemporary Myanmar Society." Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, 2008.

"The Global Competitiveness Report." edited by Klaus Schwab. Geneva: World Economic Forum, 2015.

"Global Terrorism Index 2018: Measuring and Understanding the Impact of Terrorism." Sydney, 2018.

Harris, Ian. "Introduction to Buddhism and the Political Process: Patterns of Interactions." Chap. 1 In *Buddhism and the Political Process*, edited by Hiroko Kawanami, 1 - 11. London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2016.

"Hidden Hands Behind Communal Violence in Myanmar: Case Study of the Mandalay Riots." In *Justice Trust Policy Report*. New York: Justice Trust, 2015.

Hill, Cameron. "Defence Cooperation with Myanmar - Australia and Other Countries: A Quick Guide." In *Research Paper Series, 2017-18*. Canberra: Parliamentary Library, Commonwealth of Australia, 2017.

Hindstrom, Hanna. "Burma President Backs Anti-Muslim 'Hate Preacher' Wirathu." Democratic Voice of Burma, http://www.dvb.no/news/politics-news/burma-president-backs-anti-muslim-%E2%80%98hate-preacher%E2%80%99-wirathu/28955. (accessed October 23, 2018).

———. "Nld Blocked Muslim Candidates to Appease Ma Ba Tha: Party Member." The Irrawaddy, http://www.irrawaddy.com/election/news/nld-blocked-muslim-candidates-to-appease-ma-ba-tha-party-member. (accessed August 24, 2018).

———. "Suu Kyi: "We Need Precise Laws on Citizenship"." Democratic Voice of Burma, http://www.dvb.no/news/suu-kyi-%E2%80%9Cwe-need-precise-laws-on-citizenship%E2%80%9D/22447. (accessed August 18, 2018).

Hintha. "(English) Aung San Suu Kyi's 2012 Campaign Tv Speech W/ English Subtitles." youtube.com, 2012.

Hlaing, Min Aung. "All People Should Bear in Mind "Myanmar Spirit" without Racial and Religious Discrimination, and to Strive for the Country's Development in Cohesive Union (Speech Delivered at the Annual Armed Forces Day)." https://www.facebook.com/seniorgeneralminaunghlaing/posts/1922289607805518. (accessed May 23, 2018).

———. "Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Maha Thray Sithu Min Aung Hlaing Delivers Speech at Parade of 72nd Anniversary Armed Forces Day for 2017." https://www.facebook.com/seniorgeneralminaunghlaing/posts/1525338914167258. (accessed May 23, 2018).

———. "Duties and Actions Must Be in Line with the Law." https://www.facebook.com/seniorgeneralminaunghlaing/posts/1711630188871462. (accessed July 24, 2018).

———. "Entire Government Institutions and People Must Defend the Country with Strong Patriotism." https://www.facebook.com/seniorgeneralminaunghlaing/posts/1698274643540350. (accessed July 24, 2018).

Hlaing, Min Aung "Senior General Maha Thray Sithu Min Aung Hlaing Addresses 71st Anniversary Armed Forces Day Parade." https://www.facebook.com/seniorgeneralminaunghlaing/posts/1188089224558897. (accessed May 23, 2018).

Holliday, I. *Burma Redux: Global Justice and the Quest for Political Reform in Myanmar.* Columbia University Press, 2012.

Holliday, Ian. "Voting and Violence in Myanmar: Nation Building for a Transition to Democracy." In *Burma or Myanmar? The Struggle for National Identity*, 23-49: World Scientific, 2010.

Holmes, Oliver. "Fact Check: Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech on the Rohingya Crisis " The Guardian, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/sep/20/fact-check-aung-san-suu-kyi-rohingya-crisis-speech-myanmar. (accessed August 27, 2018).

Hookway, James. "Buddhist Leader Spreads Hatred of Muslims in Myanmar." *Dow Jones Institutional News*, 10/12/

2017 Oct 12 2017.

Htun, Htun. "Yearlong Preaching Ban on Firebrand Monk Almost Up." The Irrawaddy https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/yearlong-preaching-ban-firebrand-monk-almost.html. (accessed October 10, 2018).

"Human Rights Situation That Require the Council's Attention." Geneva: United Nations Human Rights Council, 2013.

Human Rights Watch. "Burma: Government Plan Would Segregate Rohingya - Forced Resettlement, Discriminatory Citizenship Creates Dangers." Human Rights Watch, https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/10/03/burma-government-plan-would-segregate-rohingya. (accessed July 24, 2018).

———. "Burma: Growing Political Prisoner Population." Human Rights Watch, https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/17/burma-growing-political-prisoner-population. (accessed October 29, 2018).

———. "Burma: National Commission Denies Atrocities." Human Rights Watch, https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/08/07/burma-national-commission-denies-atrocities. (accessed August 24, 2018).

———. "Burma: Security Forces Raped Rohingya Women, Girls." Human Rights Watch, https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/02/06/burma-security-forces-raped-rohingya-women-girls. (accessed August 25, 2018).

Hunecke, Thomas. "Mission Report of Ohchr Rapid Response Mission to Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh." Geneva: United Nations Human Rights Office Of The High Commisioner, 2017.

Hunt, Katie. "Rohingya Crisis: 'It's Not Genocide,' Say Myanmar's Hardline Monks " Cable News Network (CNN), https://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/25/asia/myanmar-buddhist-nationalism-mabatha/index.html. (accessed January 2, 2019).

Hunt, Luke. "The Trouble with Myanmar and Rohingya Repatriation." *The Diplomat*, 2018 Apr 20 2018.

Hussain, Naveeda. "Federalism, Freedom and Fear-Mongering: Democratization and Violent Conflict in

Rakhine State, Myanmar." *The Kiessling Papers*, no. December 2017 (2017).

Ibrahim, Azeem. *The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar's Hidden Genocide*. Oxford University Press, 2016.

"Intra- and Extra-Asean Trade, 2015." edited by ASEAN Statistics: Association od Southeast Asian Nations, 2016.

"Intra-Asean Trade, 2010-2013." Kuala Lumpur: Ministry of International Trade and Industry, 2013.

Jolliffe, Kim. "Ethnic Armed Conflic and Territorial Administration in Myanmar." edited by The Asian Foundation. Yangon, Myanmar: The Asia Foundation, 2015.

Kaplan, Sarah. "The Serene-Looking Buddhist Monk Accused of Inciting Burma's Sectarian Violence." The Washington Post, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/05/27/the-burmese-bin-laden-fueling-the-rohingya-migrant-crisis-in-southeast-asia/?utm_term=.f872db60c9be. (accessed October 20, 2018).

Kaufman, Stuart J. "Ethnicity as a Generator of Conflict." *Routledge handbook of ethnic conflict* 91 (2010).

———. "Symbolic Politics or Rational Choice? Testing Theories of Extreme Ethnic Violence." *International Security* 30, no. 4 (2006): 45-86.

Keane, Feargal. "The Burmese Monks Who Preach Intolerance against Muslim Rohingyas." BBC News, 2012.

Kempel, Susanne, Chan Myawe Aung Sun, and Aung Tun. "Myanmar Political Parties at a Time of Transition." Yangon: Pyoe Pin Programme, 2015.

Khine, Tin Aung. "Myanmar's Religion Ministry Must 'Take Responsibility' for Rabble-Rousing Monks: Interview." Radio Free Asia, https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/myanmars-religion-ministry-must-take-responsibility-for-rabble-rousing-monks-interview-02282018160726.html. (accessed November 1, 2018).

Kinseth, Ashley S. "Genocide in the Modern Era: Social Nedia and the Proliferation of Hate Speech in Myanmar." Tea Circle Oxford, https://teacircleoxford.com/2018/05/10/genocide-in-the-modern-era-social-media-and-the-proliferation-of-hate-speech-in-myanmar/. (accessed November 6, 2018).

Kono, Taro. "Establishment of an Independent Commission of Enquiry by the Myanmar Government and the Agreement on the Memorandum of Understanding (Mou) between Myanmar Government and the Un Agencies Concerning Their Activities in Northern Rakhine State." news release, 2018, https://www.mofa.go.jp/press/release/press1e_000070.html.

Kramer, Tom. "Ethnic Conflict and Lands Rights in Myanmar." *Social Research: An International Quarterly* 82, no. 2 (2015): 355-74.

Kudo, Toshihiro. "One Year of Myanmar's Thein Sein Government: Background and Outlook of Reforms." Tokyo: Institute of Developing Economies - Japan External Trade Organization, 2012.

Kumbun, Joe. "The Blossoming Relationship between India and Myanmar." Frontier Myanmar, https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/the-blossoming-relationship-between-india-and-myanmar. (accessed February 12, 2019).

Kyaw, Aye Thidar, and Clare Hammond. "Government Reveals 12-Point Economic Policy." The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/business/21664-nld-12-point-economic-policy-announcement.html. (accessed January 20, 2019).

Kyaw, Kyaw. "Analysis of Myanmar's Nld Landslide " New Mandala, http://www.newmandala.org/analysis-of-myanmars-nld-landslide/. (accessed August 14, 2018).

Kyaw, Nyi Nyi. "Islamophobia in Buddhist Myanmar: The 969 Movement and Anti-Muslim Violence." *Islam and the State in Myanmar: Muslim-Buddhist relations and the politics of belonging* (2016): 183-210.

———. "Myanmar's Other Muslims: The Case of the Kaman." In *Citizenship in Myanmar: Ways of Being in and from Burma*, edited by Ashley South and Marie Lall, 279-99. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2018.

Kyaw, Ting Aung, Van Patrick King, Pailin Wedel, and Htoo Tay Zar. "The Monk Preaching Myanmar's Buddhist Nationalism Mandalay, Myanmar." edited by Open Hands Initiative Global Post: PoliticallyRude, 2013.

Landé, Carl H. "Ethnic Conflict, Ethnic Accommodation, and Nation-Building in Southeast Asia." *Studies in Comparative International Development* 33, no. 4 (December 01 1999): 89-117.

Latt, Sai. "Bbc under Fire on Rohingyas " newmandala.org, http://www.newmandala.org/bbc-under-fire-on-rohingyas/. (accessed January 19, 2018).

Latt, Win Ko Ko, and Min Thein Aung. "Myanmar's Rakhine Lawmakers Want More 'Ethnic Villages' in Muslim-Majority Areas." Radio Free Asia, https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/myanmars-rakhine-lawmakers-want-more-ethnic-villages-in-muslim-majority-areas-06052017163718.html. (accessed October 12, 2018).

Leider, Jacques P. "'The Frictions in the Rakhine State Are Less About Islamophobia Than Rohingya-Phobia'." By Sangeeta Barooah Pisharoty (2017).

———. "Rohingya: The Name, the Movement, the Quest for Identity." *Nation Building in Myanmar* 255 (2014).

Lim, Merlyna. "Freedom to Hate: Social Media, Algorithmic Enclaves, and the Rise of Tribal Nationalism in Indonesia." *Critical Asian Studies* 49, no. 3 (2017): 411-27.

Linn, Zin. "Burma Army's Boss Calls for Stronger Armed Forces." Asian Correspondent https://asiancorrespondent.com/2013/03/burma-armys-boss-calls-for-stronger-and-modernized-armed-forces/#ACmfEaBVV4mtqSaK.97. (accessed May 23, 2018).

Lintner, Bertil. "The Military's Still in Charge: Why Reform in Burma Is Only Skin-Deep." Foreign Policy, https://foreignpolicy.com/2013/07/09/the-militarys-still-in-charge/. (accessed July 23, 2018).

———. "Myanmar (Burma): Militancy in Arakan State." *Asia News Monitor*, 12/19/

2016 Dec 19 2016.

Lone, Wa. "Myanmar Sends Hundreds of Troops to Rakhine as Tension Rises: Sources." Reuters. (accessed October 13, 2018.).

———. "Rakhine Civil Society Forms Groups to Monitor Ingo Activities." The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/10513-rakhine-civil-society-forms-groups-to-monitor-ingo-activities.html. (accessed February 26, 2019).

———. "Usdp Candidate Donates Big to Ma Ba Tha." The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/16287-usdp-candidate-donates-big-to-ma-ba-tha.html. (accessed November 10, 2018).

Lone, Wa, and Andrew R.C. Marschall. "Buddhist Mistrust of Foreign Aid Workers Hampers Relief for Myanmar's Rohingya." Reuters, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-aid/buddhist-mistrust-of-foreign-aid-workers-hampers-relief-for-myanmars-rohingya-idUSKCN1BY0BZ. (accessed February 11, 2019).

Long, Kayleigh. "In Sittwe, an Independent Candidate in Name Only Tells of a Split within His Party." The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/17332-in-sittwe-an-independent-candidate-in-name-only-tells-of-a-split-within-his-party.html. (accessed October 14, 2018).

Lynn, Nyan Hlaing. "Rakhine Political Leader Dr Aye Maung Arrested in Sittwe after Mrauk U Violence." Frontier Myanmar, https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/rakhine-political-leader-dr-aye-maung-arrested-in-sittwe-after-mrauk-u-violence. (accessed November 22, 2018).

———. "Tensions Ahead over 'Race and Religion' Laws." Frontier Myanmar, https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/tensions-ahead-over-changes-to-race-and-religion-laws. (accessed September 2, 2018).

M-Media. "Fanatical Buddhist Monk Saydaw Wirathu Calling for Boycott of Myanmar Muslims [Video]." Youtube.com, 2013.

MacGregor, Fiona, and Thu Thu Aung. "New Govt to Defend 'Race and Religion' Laws at Un Meeting." The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/21218-new-govt-to-defend-race-and-religion-laws-at-un-meeting.html. (accessed August 31, 2018).

MacManus, Thomas, Penny Green, and Alicia de la Cour Venning. *Countdown to Annihilation: Genocide in Myanmar.* International State Crime Initiative, 2015.

Mahoney, James. "The Logic of Process Tracing Tests in the Social Sciences." *Sociological Methods & Research* 41, no. 4 (2012): 570-97.

Manch, Thomas. "For Muslims across Myanmar, Citizenship Rights a Legal Fiction." Frontier Myanmar, https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/for-muslims-across-myanmar-citizenship-rights-a-legal-fiction. (accessed October 11, 2018).

Mann, Michael. *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing.* Cambridge University Press, 2005.

Mansfield, Edward D, and Jack Snyder. "Democratic Transitions, Institutional Strength, and War." *International Organization* 56, no. 2 (2002): 297-337.

Marshall, Andrew R.C. "Myanmar's Official Embrace of Extreme Buddhism." In *Reuters Special Report*, edited by Bill Tarrant and Michael Williams: Reuters, 2013.

———. "Special Report: Myanmar Gives Official Blessing to Anti-Muslim Monks." Reuters, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-969-specialreport/special-report-myanmar-gives-official-blessing-to-anti-muslim-monks-idUSBRE95Q04720130627. (accessed July 25, 2018).

Martin, Michael F. "Burma's 2010 Elections: Implications of the

New Constitution and Election Laws " In *CSR Reports for Congress*. Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2010.

Mathieson, David Scott. "The Electoral Aftermath in Rakhine State." Human Rights Watch, https://www.hrw.org/news/2016/01/06/electoral-aftermath-rakhine-state-0. (accessed December 8, 2018).

———. "Shadowy Rebels Extend Myanmar's Wars." Asia Times, http://www.atimes.com/article/shadowy-rebels-extend-myanmars-wars/. (accessed February 2, 2019).

Matsui, Motokazu. "Myanmar's Foreign Direct Investment Rush Recedes." The Financial Times, https://www.ft.com/content/f7bda5bc-e150-11e6-8405-9e5580d6e5fb. (accessed September 5, 2018.).

Maung, Aye. "Arakan National Party Presents Policy and Programmes." Global New Light of Myanmar, http://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/arakan-national-party-presents-policy-and-programmes/. (accessed December 29, 2018).

———. "Interview with Dr. Aye Maung on the Rakhine State Issue." By Hsan Moe Tun (2017).

Maw, Aka Kyaw Min. "Stability and Expectations: Economic Reform and the Nld Government." *Southeast Asian Affairs* (2018): 221-42.

McCarthy, Stephen. "The Buddhist Political Rhetoric of Aung San Suu Kyi." *Contemporary Buddhism* 5, no. 2 (2004): 67-81.

———. "Burma and Asean: A Marriage of Inconvenience ". Chap. 12 In *Burma or Myanmar? The Struggle for National Identity*, edited by Lowell Dittmer, 327 - 62. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing Co. Pte. Ltd., 2010.

Mclaughlin, Timothy. "Rising Rakhine Party Looming Threat to Myanmar's Muslim Minority." Reuters, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-election-rohingya/rising-rakhine-party-looming-threat-to-myanmars-muslim-minority-idUSKCN0RV5RO20151001. (accessed October 9, 2018.).

McPherson, Poppy. "Aung San Suu Kyi: Myanmar's Great Hope Fails to Live up to Expectations " The Guardian, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/31/aung-san-suu-kyi-myanmars-great-hope-fails-to-live-up-to-expectations. (accessed January 27, 2019).

Miles, Tom. "U.N. Investigators Cite Facebook Role in Myanmar Crisis." Reuters, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-iran-sanctions-anger/facing-new-sanctions-iranians-vent-anger-at-rich-and-powerful-idUSKCN1NC0J5. (accessed November 2, 2018).

Min, Aung Khiang, and Joses Kuan. "Human Rights Commission Comes under Fire over Record." Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/opinion/18786-human-rights-commission-comes-under-fire-over-record.html. (accessed July 24, 2018).

Min, Swe. "Special Report - with Official Help, Myanmar's Radical Buddhists Target Muslim-Owned Businesses." Myanmar Now, http://www.myanmar-now.org/news/i/?id=9ba61afc-285d-49bd-8f73-8b9efaf941c0. (accessed October 26, 2018).

Moe, Moe. "Ma Ba Tha Changes Name, Still Officially Illegal." The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/ma-ba-tha-changes-name-still-officially-illegal.html. (accessed October 22, 2018).

Mon, Su Myat. "The Kaman: Citizens Who Suffer." Frontier Myanmar, https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/the-kaman-citizens-who-suffer. (accessed February 2, 209).

———. "Push for Citizenship Verification Brings Contentious Law into Focus." The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/push-for-citizenship-verification-brings-contentious-law-into-focus.html. (accessed October 10, 2018).

Mon, Ye. "Nationalist Party Opposes Official Term for Muslim Community in Rakhine." The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/20997-nationalist-party-opposes-official-term-for-muslim-community-in-rakhine.html. (accessed February 22, 2019).

"'My World Is Finished' - Rohingya Targeted in Crimes against Humanity in Myanmar." London: Amnesty International, 2017.

"Myanmar's Military: Back to the Barracks." In *Asia Briefing*, edited by International Crisis Group. Yangon/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2014.

"Myanmar's Rakhine Advisory Commission Meets with Top Leaders, Lawmakers." Washington: Federal Information & News Dispatch, Inc., 2016.

"Myanmar's Stalled Transition." In *Crisis Group Asia Briefing*, edited by International Crisis Group. Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2018.

"Myanmar (Burma) - Military Chief Warns against Strong-Arming Voters in National Elections." *Asia News Monitor*, 03/31/

2015 Mar 31 2015.

"Myanmar (Burma): Analysis: Myanmar Army Deployed in Maungdaw." *Asia News Monitor*, August 15, 2017 2017.

"Myanmar (Burma): Australia Reaffirms Defence Cooperation with Tatmadaw." *Asia News Monitor*, Mar 08, 2018 2018.

"Myanmar (Burma): Burma Military Chief Defends Army's Political Role." *Asia News Monitor*, Mar 28, 2012 2012.

"Myanmar (Burma): Senior General Min Aung Hlaing Says Dialogue without Ceasefire Would Lead to More Armed Conflict with Ethnic Groups." *Asia News Monitor*, Apr 02, 2014 2014.

"Myanmar (Burma): Snr-Gen Min Aung Hlaing's Armed Forces Day Speeches." *Asia News Monitor*, March 27, 2018 2018.

"The Myanmar Elections: Results and Implications ". In *Crisis Group Asia Briefing*, edited by International Crisis Group (ICG). Yangon/Brussels: International Crisis Group (ICG), 2015.

"Myanmar Ends State of Emergency in Western Rakhine State." Washington: Federal Information & News Dispatch, Inc., 2016.

"Myanmar Military Chief Calls for "Leading Role" in National Politics." *BBC Monitoring Asia Pacific*, March 28, 2016 2016.

Myanmar Online Data Information Network Solutions. "Ministry of Immigration and Population " Myanmar Online Data Information Network Solutions, http://www.modins.net/myanmarinfo/ministry/population.htm. (accessed November 10, 2018).

"Myanmar Trade Summary 2015 Data." World Bank Group, 2019.

"Myanmar/Burma: Eu Sanctions 7 Senior Military, Border Guard and Police Officials Responsible for or Associated with Serious Human Rights Violations against Rohingya Population." news release., 06.25.2018, 2018.

"Myanmar: A New Muslim Insurgency in Rakhine State." In *Asia Report*, edited by International Crisis Group. Yangon/Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2016.

"Myanmar: The Politics of Rakhine State." In *Asia Report*. Brussels: International Crisis Group, 2014.

"Myanmar's Rohingya Crisis Enters a Dangerous New Phase." In *Asia Report*, edited by International Crisis Group (ICG). Brussels, 2017.

Myint, Moe. "Anp Alleges Govt 'Wrongly' Issued Citizenship in Arakan State." The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/anp-alleges-govt-wrongly-issued-citizenship-in-arakan-state.html. (accessed October 10, 2018).

———. "Anp's Criticism of Government in Peace Conference Speech Sparks Controversy." The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/anps-criticism-government-peace-conference-speech-sparks-controversy.html. (accessed October 11, 2018).

———. "Ninety Percent of Rohingya Population Ejected from Rakhine." The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/specials/ninety-percent-rohingya-population-ejected-rakhine.html. (accessed August 28, 2018).

Myint, Sithu Aung. "Ma Ba Tha, Usdp: Election Bedfellows?" The Myanmar Times, Ma Ba Tha, USDP: election bedfellows? (accessed November 22, 2018).

———. "The Nld Duped Again on Constitution." The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/opinion/15181-the-nld-duped-again-on-constitution.html. (accessed January 22, 2019).

———. "White Cards: The Junta's Toxic Legacy." Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/opinion/10076-white-cards-the-junta-s-toxic-legacy.html. (accessed July 25, 2018).

Myint, Yi Ywal. "Rejection of Rakhine Advisory Body Approved by State Hluttaw." The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/nay-pyi-taw/22535-rejection-of-rakhine-advisory-body-approved-by-state-hluttaw.html. (accessed August 25, 2018).

Myoe, Maung Aung. "Myanmar's Foreign Policy under the Usdp Government: Continuities and Changes." *Journal of Current Southeast Asian Affairs* 35, no. 1 (2016): 123-50.

Naing, Saw Yan. "Unhcr Rejects Rohingya Resettlement Suggestion." The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/unhcr-rejects-rohingya-resettlement-suggestion.html. (accessed October 12, 2018).

Naing, Shoon. "Myanmar Monk Returns to Preaching after Ban, Denies Fuelling Rakhine Violence." Reuters, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-buddhist/myanmar-monk-returns-to-preaching-after-ban-denies-fuelling-rakhine-violence-idUSKCN1GM0GK. (accessed March 03, 2019).

Naing, Tun Myat. "Arakan Army Chief: 'The Entire Arakan People Support Us'." By Nan Lwin Hnin Pwint (5.10.2016 2016).

Naing, U Myint. "Arakan National Party Paper Read at 2018 International Day of Democracy Ceremony." Global Light Of Myanmar, http://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/arakan-national-party-paper-read-at-2018-international-day-of-democracy-ceremony/. (accessed October 10, 2018.).

Narinjara News. "Arakan Government to Be Led by Nld Lawmaker." Narinjara News, http://narinjara.com/arakan-government-to-be-led-by-nld-lawmaker/. (accessed December 5, 2018).

———. "Arakan Public Meeting Successfully Concludes in Rathidaung." Narinjara, http://narinjara.com/arakan-public-meeting-successfully-concludes-in-rahindaung/. (accessed October 5, 2018).

———. "Colonial Era Exploitation Should Be Avoided: Dr. Aye Maung." Narinjara, http://narinjara.com/colonial-era-exploitation-should-be-avoided-dr-aye-maung/. (accessed September 10, 2018).

National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. "Global Terrorism Database [Data File]." National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd. (accessed September 17, 2018.).

"National League for Democracy - 2015 Election Manifesto." National League For Democracy, 2015.

"Natural Resources of Myanmar (Burma): Ownership, Management, Revenue Sharing and Impacts." Ethnic Nationalities Affairs Centre (Union of Burma), 2017.

"A New Dimension of Violence in Myanmar's Rakhine State ". In *Crisis Group Asia Briefing*. Brussels: International Crisis Group (ICG), 2019.

News, BBC. "Suu Kyi Blames Burma Violence on 'Climate of Fear'." British Broadcasting Corporation, 2013.

Nitta, Yuichi. "Two Years on, Myanmar's Lack of Reform Turns Investors Away." Nikkei Asian Review, https://asia.nikkei.com/Economy/Two-years-on-Myanmar-s-lack-of-reform-turns-investors-away. (accessed January 22, 2019).

Nyein, Nyein. "State Counselor Forms Enterprise on Rakhine State, Calls for 'Unity'." The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/state-counselor-forms-enterprise-rakhine-state-calls-unity.html. (accessed August 28, 2018).

Oo, Khin Maung. "A Flea Cannot Make a Whirl of Dust." *The Global New Light of Myanmar*, 11.27. 2016.

Oo, Kyaw Lwin , Kyaw Thu, and Min Thein. "Rakhine Political Parties to Meet over Myanmar Official's Remarks on Ethnic Army." Radio Free Asia, https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/rakhine-political-parties-to-meet-01092019163358.html. (accessed February 3, 2019).

"Opening Ceremony of First Arakan National Party Conference Held

25.10.2014 " news release., 2014, https://www.facebook.com/792021817520982/posts/press-releaseopening-ceremony-of-first-arakan-national-party-conference-held2510/795445623845268/.

Oppenheim, Marella. "'It Only Takes One Terrorist': The Buddhist Monk Who Reviles Myanmar's Muslims." The Guardian, https://www.theguardian.com/global-

development/2017/may/12/only-takes-one-terrorist-buddhist-monk-reviles-myanmar-muslims-rohingya-refugees-ashin-wirathu. (accessed November 11, 2018).

Paddock, Richard C. . "Aung San Suu Kyi Asks U.S. Not to Refer to 'Rohingya'." The New York Times, https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/07/world/asia/myanmar-rohingya-aung-san-suu-kyi.html. (accessed August 25, 2018).

"Pakistan's Jihadist Heartland: Southern Punjab." In *Asia Report*: International Crisis Group (ICG), 2016.

Parikh, Tej. "Without State Reform, Myanmar Isn't Going Anywhere Fast." The Diplomat, https://thediplomat.com/2018/06/without-state-reform-myanmar-isnt-going-anywhere-fast/. (accessed December 12, 2018).

Pedersen, Morten B. "Myanmar in 2014:'Tacking against the Wind'." *Southeast Asian Affairs* 2015, no. 1 (2015): 221-45.

Peel, Michael. "Myanmar: The Military-Commercial Complex - the Emerging Market Tempts Multinationals but Groups with Links to the Army Loom Large." Financial Times, https://www.ft.com/content/c6fe7dce-d26a-11e6-b06b-680c49b4b4c0. (accessed July 23, 2018).

PERMANENT MISSION OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR TO THE UNITED NATIONS. "Statement by His Excellency U Thein Sein, President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and Chairman of the Myanmar Delegation " news release, 2012, https://gadebate.un.org/sites/default/files/gastatements/67/MM_en.pdf.

"President Thein Sein's Inaugural Speech." In *EBO Analysis Paper*, edited by Euro Burma Office. Chiang Mai: Euro Burma Office, 2011.

Preston, Alex. "The Rohingya and Myanmar's 'Buddhist Bin Laden'." GQ (Gentlemen's Quarterly), https://www.gq-magazine.co.uk/article/myanmar-rohingya-muslim-burma. (accessed October 23, 2018).

Promchertchoo, Pichayada. "Distrust and Suspicion Deepen in Myanmar's Rakhine State Amid Violence." Channel News Asia. (accessed October 25, 2018).

Punton, Melanie, and Katharina Welle. "Applying Process Tracing in Five Steps." *Centre for Development Impact Practice Paper* April 2015, no. 10 (2015): 1-8.

Qingrun, Song. "Second Panglong Conference Sees Significant Breakthroughs." Mizzima, http://www.mizzima.com/news-opinion/second-panglong-conference-sees-significant-breakthroughs. (accessed August 25, 2018).

Quintana, Tomás Ojea. "Statement of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar." news release, 2013, http://www.globalr2p.org/media/files/rapporteur-press-statement-feb-2013.pdf.

"Rakhine Sectarian Violence - One Year On." *IRIN Asia Service*, 06/13/

2013 Jun 13 2013.

"Rakhine State Hluttaw in Line with Local Populace: Rakhine State Hluttaw Speaker." news release., http://www.president-office.gov.mm/en/?q=issues/rakhine-state-affairs/id-8083.

Raleigh, Cliondah, Andrew Linke, Hegre Håvard, and Joakim Karlsen. "Introducing Acled - Armed Conflict Location and Event Data." *Journal of Peace Research* 47, no. 5 (2010): 651-60.

Rees, Evan. "The Buddhist Core of Fractured Myanmar." Stratfor Worldview, https://worldview.stratfor.com/article/buddhist-core-fractured-myanmar. (accessed October 24, 2018).

Regan, Helen. "'What Future Do We Have?' Caught in the Crossfire of Myanmar's Northern Conflict, Civilians See Little Hope." Time Magazine. (accessed 03.01, 2019).

Regan, Patrick M, and Daniel Norton. "Greed, Grievance, and Mobilization in Civil Wars." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 49, no. 3 (2005): 319-36.

"Report of Ohchr Mission to Bangladesh: Interviews with Rohingyas Fleeing from Myanmar since 9 October 2016." edited by UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR): United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

2017.

"The Resistance of the Monks." Human Rights Watch, 2009.

"Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly on 24 December 2012." edited by United Nations General Assembly. New York: United Nations General Assembly, 2013.

Reuters. "Govt Rejects Allegations of Human Rights Abuses in Rakhine." The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/govt-rejects-allegations-human-rights-abuses-rakhine.html. (accessed August 24, 2018).

———. "Myanmar Minister Assures Rohingya in Bangladesh Repatriation Is a Priority." The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-minister-assures-rohingya-bangladesh-repatriation-priority.html. (accessed August 28, 2018).

Richardson, John E. "Analysing Newspapers." *An approach from critical discourse analysis New York: Palgrave Macmillan* (2007).

"Rohingya Repatriation Survey." edited by Xchange Foundation. Malta: Xchange Foundation, 2018.

Rousseau, David L. *Identifying Threats and Threatening Identities: The Social Construction of Realism and Liberalism.* Stanford University Press, 2006.

Saha, S.C. *Perspectives on Contemporary Ethnic Conflict: Primal Violence or the Politics of Conviction?* : Lexington Books, 2006.

Sambanis, Nicholas. "Do Ethnic and Nonethnic Civil Wars Have the Same Causes?: A Theoretical and Empirical Inquiry (Part 1)." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 45, no. 3 (2001): 259-82.

Samet, Oren. "The Explosive Politics of Voting Rights in Myanmar." The Diplomat, https://thediplomat.com/2015/03/the-explosive-politics-of-voting-rights-in-myanmar/. (accessed July 24, 2018).

Saw, U Hla. "Interview with U Hla Saw, General Secretary of the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party." By Narinjara News Agency (2011).

Schissler, Matt, Matthew J Walton, and Phyu Phyu Thi. "Reconciling Contradictions: Buddhist-Muslim Violence, Narrative Making and Memory in Myanmar." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 47, no. 3 (2017): 376-95.

Schissler, Matthew. "New Technologies, Established Practices: Developing Narratives of Muslim Threat in Myanmar." *Islam and the State in Myanmar: Muslim-Buddhist Relations and the Politics of Belonging* (2016): 211-33.

Schonthal, Benjamin, and Matthew J Walton. "The (New) Buddhist Nationalisms? Symmetries and Specificities in Sri Lanka and Myanmar." *Contemporary Buddhism* 17, no. 1 (2016): 81-115.

Sein, Thein. "President Thein Sein's State of Union Speech (2012)." Hla Oo, http://hlaoo1980.blogspot.com/2012/03/president-thein-seins-state-of-union.html. (accessed July 25, 2018).

Selth, Andrew. "Burma's Muslims and the War on Terror." *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism* 27, no. 2 (2004): 107-26.

———. "The Fallen Idol: Aung San Suu Kyi and the Politics of Personality." ABC Religion and Ethics, http://www.abc.net.au/religion/articles/2017/09/12/4733319.htm. (accessed August 28, 2018).

———. "The Rohingya Crisis and Myanmar's Military Responses." Lowy Institute, https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/rohingyas-and-politico-military-strategies. (accessed May 23, 2018).

"Senior General Min Aung Hlaing Holds Talks with Thai Pm." news release., 2018.

"Senior General Min Aung Hlaing Meets with Chinese President Mr Xi Jinping." *The Global New Light Of Myanmar*, 11.2. 2016.

Services, Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence. "The Stance on the Terrorist Attacks of the Extremist Bengalis in Buthidaung-Maungtaw Region in Rakhine State " https://www.facebook.com/Cincds/posts/the-stance-on-the-terrorist/1492836477503879/. (accessed July 24, 2018).

Sharma, Raj Kumar. "Rise of Islamic Radicalism in Bangladesh Implications for the Security of North-East India." [In English]. *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies* 19, no. 1/2 (Jan-Jun

Jan-Jun 2015 2015): 67-0_4.

Shin, Aung. "Suu Kyi Strengthens Ties with Asean and China." The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/opinion/24927-suu-kyi-strengthens-ties-with-asean-and-china.html. (accessed January 27, 2019).

Smith, Anthony D. "The Ethnic Origins of Nations." (1986).

———. *Nationalism and Modernism.* Routledge, 1998.

Smith, Martin Dec. *Ethnic Groups in Burma : Development, Democracy and Human Rights / Martin Smith ; in Collaboration with Annie Allsebrook.* Human Rights Series ; No. 8. Edited by Annie Allsebrook and International Anti-Slavery. London: Anti-Slavery International, 1994.

Smith, Matthew. *" All You Can Do Is Pray": Crimes against Humanity and Ethnic Cleansing of Rohingya Muslims in Burma's Arakan State.* Human Rights Watch, 2013.

Smith, Matthew, Amy Smith, Puttanee Kangkun, Taimoor Sonhan, Nickey Diamond, and John Quinley. "They Gave Them Long Swords: Preparations for Genocide and Crimes against Humanity against Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine State, Myanmar." Fortify Rights, 2018.

Smith, Mikaila. "The Nuances of Win-Win: China-Myanmar Relations in 2018." China-United States Exchange Foundation, https://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/the-nuances-of-win-win-china-myanmar-relations-in-2018. (accessed January 29, 2019).

Solanki, Viraj. "India Boosts Relations with Myanmar, Where Chinese Influence Is Growing." The International Institutie for Strategic Studies, https://www.iiss.org/blogs/analysis/2018/05/india-myanmar-china-relations. (accessed January 28, 2019).

State Counsellor Office Information Committee. "Information Committee Refutes Rumours of Rape." The Republic of the Union of Myanmar - State Counsellor Office, http://www.statecounsellor.gov.mm/en/node/551. (accessed August 25, 2018).

Stecklow, Steve, Tin Htet Paing, Simon Lewis, Shoon Niang, and Aye Min Thant. "Why Facebook Is Losing the War on Hate Speech in Myanmar." Reuters, https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/myanmar-facebook-hate/. (accessed November 6, 2018).

Steckman, Laura. "Myanmar at the Crossroads: The Shadow of Jihadist Extremism." *Counter Terrorist Trends and Analyses* 7, no. 4 (2015): 10-16.

Stewart, Frances. "Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: An Introduction and Some Hypotheses." In *Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict. Conflict, Inequality and Ethnicity*, edited by Frances Stewart. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008.

Stoakes, Emanuel. "Monks, Powerpoints, and Ethnic Cleansing." Foreign Policy, https://foreignpolicy.com/2015/10/26/evidence-links-myanmar-government-monks-ethnic-cleansing-rohingya/. (accessed October 20, 2018).

Stokke, Kristian, Roman Vakulch, and Indra Øverland. "Myanmar: A Political Economy Analysis." Oslo: Norwegian Institute of International Affairs, 2018.

Strangio, Sebastian. "Wirathu: "The Intention of Islam Is to Influence the Whole World through Rapid Population"." Southeast Asia Globe, http://sea-globe.com/wirathu-interview-sebastian-strangio-southeast-asia-globe/. (accessed October 27, 2018.).

Suaedy, Ahmad, and Muhammad Hafiz. "Citizenship Challenges in Myanmar's Democratic Transition: Case Study of the Rohingya." *Indonesian Journal for Islamic Studies* 22, no. 1 (2015): 29-65.

Suan, Hao Do. "Letter Dated 27 June 2018 from the Permanent Representative of Myanmar to the United Nations Addressed to the President of the Security Council." United Nations Security Council, 2018.

Sugimoto, Orie, and Aung San Suu Kyi. "Exclusive: Interview with Aung San Suu Kyi." Japan Broadcasting Corporation (NHK), https://www3.nhk.or.jp/nhkworld/nhknewsline/inconversation/exclusiveaungsansuukyi/. (accessed August 27, 2018).

Supalak, Ganjanakhundee. "Myanmar Elite Must Alter Their Thinking on the Rohingya." *The Nation*, 02/27/

2013 Feb 27 2013.

"Survey of Burma/Myanmar - Public Opinion." Center For Insights in Survey Research, 2017.

Suu Kyi, Aung San. "Aung San Suu Kyi - Nobel Lecture." The Nobel Foundation, https://www.nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1991/kyi-lecture_en.html. (accessed August 22, 2018).

———. "Daw Aung San Suu Kyi Report on the Rakhine Crisis." Voltairenet, http://www.voltairenet.org/article198352.html. (accessed August 28, 2018).

———. "Speech Delivered by Her Excellency Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, State Counsellor of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on Government's Efforts with Regard to National Reconciliation and Peace " news release, 2017, http://www.myanmarembassydhaka.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/SC-speech-transcription-Final-_19-9-2017__2.pdf.

———. "State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech on the Occasion of the One Year Anniversary of the Government (30 March 2017)." news release, 2017, http://www.statecounsellor.gov.mm/en/node/798.

———. "State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's Speech on the 2nd Anniversary of Nld Government." The Global Light of Myanmar, http://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/state-counsellor-daw-aung-san-suu-kyis-speech-2nd-anniversary-nld-government/. (accessed September 2, 2018).

Swami, Praveen. "India's Invisible Jihad." [In English]. *Current Trends in Islamist Ideology* 22 (Nov 2017 2017): 80-115,60.

Swe, U Kyaw Tint. "Report on the Current Work of the Government: Political, Economic and Social Development, and the Peace Process." Naypyidaw: The Republic Of The Union Of Myanmar President Office, 2018.

Tausch, Nicole, Julia C Becker, Russell Spears, Oliver Christ, Rim Saab, Purnima Singh, and Roomana N Siddiqui. "Explaining Radical Group Behavior: Developing Emotion and Efficacy Routes to Normative and Nonnormative Collective Action." *Journal of personality and social psychology* 101, no. 1 (2011): 129.

Taydas, Zeynep, Jason Enia, and Patrick James. "Why Do Civil Wars Occur? Another Look at the Theoretical Dichotomy of Opportunity Versus Grievance." *Review of international Studies* 37, no. 5 (2011): 2627-50.

Taylor, Jerome. "Burma's Rohingya Muslims: Aung San Suu Kyi's Blind Spot." The Independent, https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/burmas-rohingya-muslims-aung-san-suu-kyis-blind-spot-8061619.html. (accessed August 18, 2018).

Than, San Maung. "Arakan National Party Starts by-Election Campaign in Rathedaung." Burma News International, https://www.bnionline.net/en/news/arakan-national-party-starts-election-campaign-rathedaung. (accessed Feburary 7, 2019).

Thaung, Aung. "Head to Head with a Burmese Hardliner." By Sanay Lin (2013).

The Associated Press. "Myanmar Army Ordered to Take Offensive against Arakan Army." The Associated Press, https://www.apnews.com/3541e6892bab46399e8b424c8a1cd32b. (accessed February 2, 2019).

The Global New Light of Myanmar. "Arakan National Party Presents Policy, Stance and Work Program." The Global New Light of Myanmar, http://www.globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/arakan-national-party-presents-policy-stance-and-work-program/. (accessed October 9, 2018).

The Guardian. "Burma Census Is Not Counting Rohingya Muslims, Says Un Agency " The Guardian, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/02/burma-census-rohingya-muslims-un-agency. (accessed July 24, 2018).

The Myanmar Times. "Japan Affirms Military Ties with Tatmadaw." The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/news/japan-affirms-military-ties-tatmadaw.html. (accessed January 10, 2019).

———. "Myanmar's 2018 Foreign Policy Outlook." The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/news/myanmars-2018-foreign-policy-outlook.html. (accessed January 27, 2019).

———. "Third Panglong: Was It a Success? ." The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/news/third-panglong-was-it-success.html. (accessed January 18, 2019).

Thu, Kyaw Mratt. "Why Did Aye Maung Win in Ann?" Frontier Myanmar, https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/why-did-aye-maung-win-in-ann. (accessed February 17, 2019).

Thu, Mratt Kyaw. "Tatmadaw, Sangha and Government Must Work Together, Sitagu Sayadaw Says in Sermon to Officers." Frontier Myanmar, https://frontiermyanmar.net/en/tatmadaw-sangha-and-government-must-work-together-sitagu-sayadaw-says-in-sermon-to-officers. (accessed November 9, 2018).

Thura, Aung. "Myanmar Prominent Buddhist Monk Cheers Israeli Violations over Palestinians." MMedia, http://www.m-mediagroup.com/en/archives/8730. (accessed November 9, 2018).

"Towards a Peaceful, Fair and Prosperous Future for the People of Rakhine." Yangon: Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, 2017.

Tun, Aung, and Martin Petty. "Activists Outraged as Myanmar Jails Writer for Buddhist Insults." Reuters, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-religion/activists-outraged-as-myanmar-jails-writer-for-buddhist-insults-idUSKBN0OI24720150602. (accessed November 3, 2018).

Turnell, Sean. "Banking and Financial Regulation and Reform in Myanmar." *Journal of Southeast Asian Economies* (2014): 225-40.

UN Cartographic Section, MIMU. "Rakhine State, Myanmar (as of 16 Jul 2013)." edited by UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA): UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 2013.

UNHCR. "Bangladesh and Unhcr Agree on Voluntary Returns Framework for When Refugees Decide Conditions Are Right " UNHCR, http://www.unhcr.org/news/press/2018/4/5ad061d54/bangladesh-unhcr-agree-voluntary-returns-framework-refugees-decide-conditions.html. (accessed August 28, 2018).

———. "Refugee Response in Bangladesh." Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/myanmar_refugees. (accessed October 12, 2018).

United Nations. "For Rohingya Refugees, Imminent Surge in Births Is Traumatic Legacy of Sexual Violence - Special Report." UN News, For Rohingya Refugees, Imminent Surge in Births is Traumatic Legacy of Sexual Violence - Special Report. (accessed August 24, 2018).

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights. "Situation of Human Rights of Rohingya Muslims and Other Minorities in Myanmar." In *Annual Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and Reports of the Office of the High Commissioner and the Secretary-General*, edited by Human Rights Council: United Nations, 2016.

"Unlocking Civil Society and Peace in Myanmar." Yangon: Paung Sie Facility, 2018.

Uppsala Conflict Data Program. "Government of Myanmar (Burma) - Kio." Department of Peace and Conflict Research, https://ucdp.uu.se/#/statebased/461. (accessed March 3 2019.03.01, 2018).

van Klinken, Gerry, and Su Mon Thazin Aung. "The Contentious Politics of Anti-Muslim Scapegoating in Myanmar." *Journal of Contemporary Asia* 47, no. 3 (2017): 353-75.

Vanderbrink, Rachel, and Ko Win Niang. "Call to Put Rohingya in Refugee Camps." Radio Free Asia, https://www.rfa.org/english/news/rohingya-07122012185242.html. (accessed July 24, 2018).

"Vietnam-Myanmar (Burma): Vietnam, Myanmar Promote Defence Cooperation." *Asia News Monitor*, 06/18/

2018 Jun 18 2018.

Vinh, Vo Xuan. "Asean's Approach to Myanmar." *Himalayan and Central Asian Studies* 18, no. 1/2 (2014): 21.

Vogt, RJ, and Khin Zaw. "State/Region Hluttaw Results: Graphics." The Myanmar Times, https://www.mmtimes.com/national-news/17642-state-and-region-hluttaw-results-graphics.html#.Vkv0mC4cAfw.twitter. (accessed September 15, 2018).

Walker, Mindy. "Civil Society in Myanmar's New Democracy." In *World Learning, Myanmar*. Yangon: Institute For Political and Civic Engagements, 2017.

Walton, Matthew J. *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought in Myanmar.* Cambridge University Press, 2016.

———. "Has the Nld Learned Nothing About Ethnic Concerns?" The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/has-the-nld-learned-nothing-about-ethnic-concerns.html. (accessed August 30, 2018).

———. "Misunderstanding Myanmar's Ma Ba Tha." Asia Times, http://www.atimes.com/article/misunderstanding-myanmars-ma-ba-tha/. (accessed November 2, 2018).

———. "Monks in Politics, Monks in the World: Buddhist Activism in Contemporary Myanmar." *Social Research* 82, no. 2 (2015).

———. "'Rowdy Monks' or a Crisis of Monastic Authority?" The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/guest-column/rowdy-monks-crisis-monastic-authority.html. (accessed February 20, 2019).

Walton, Matthew J, and Susan Hayward. "Contesting Buddhist Narratives: Democratization, Nationalism, and Communal Violence in Myanmar." *Policy Studies*, no. 71 (2014): 0_1.

Wansai, Sai. "Evaluation of the Third 21st Century Panglong Conference: More Informal Engagement Than Official Meetings?" https://english.panglong.org/2018/07/16/evaluation-of-the-third-21st-century-panglong-conference-more-informal-engagement-than-official-meetings/. (accessed August 30, 2018).

"We Have to Strive Our Utmost to Stand as a Strong Government While Conducting Changes and Amendments in Order to Catch up with the Changing World - President U Thein Sein Delivers Inaugural Address to Pyidaungsu Hluttaw." *The New Light Of Myanmar*, 2011.03.31 2011, 1-6.

"We Will Destroy Everything." London: Amnesty International, 2018.

Wee, Vivienne, and Graeme Lang. "Ethnic Violence and the Loss of State Legitimacy: Burma and Indonesia in a Context of Post-Colonial Developmentalism." *Perspectives on Contemporary Ethnic Conflict: Primal Violence Or the Politics of Conviction?* (2006): 47.

Weng, Lawi. "Ethnic Groups Have Lost Faith in the Nld." The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/ethnic-groups-lost-faith-nld.html. (accessed August 24, 2018).

———. "Extremist Monks Hold Talks Throughout Strife-Torn Arakan State." The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/extremist-monks-hold-talks-throughout-strife-torn-arakan-state.html. (accessed October 22, 2018).

———. "Ma Ba Tha's New Political Party Denounces Nld Govt." The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/ma-ba-thas-new-political-party-denounces-nld-govt.html. (accessed October 22, 2018).

———. "On Armed Forces Day, One Holiday, Two Visions." The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/armed-forces-day-one-holiday-two-visions.html. (accessed August 24, 2018).

———. "Stop 'War Crimes' in Rakhine or We'll Join the Fight There, Tnla Tells Tatmadaw." The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/stop-war-crimes-rakhine-well-join-fight-tnla-tells-tatmadaw.html. (accessed March 20, 2019).

Wezeman, Pieter D., Aude Fleurant, Alexandra Kouimova, Nan Tian, and Siemon T. Wezeman. "Trends in Interntaional Arms Transfers 2017." In *SIPRI Fact Sheet*. Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, 2018.

Win, Swe. "Myanmar's Kaman Muslims Look to Elections to Restore Their Rights." Mizzima, http://mizzima.com/news-election-2015-election-features/myanmar%25E2%2580%2599s-kaman-muslims-look-elections-restore-their-rights. (accessed February 2, 2019).

Wintour, Patrick. "Aung San Suu Kyi Seeks New Relationship with Un over Rohingya Crisis " The Guardian, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/28/aung-san-suu-kyi-un-relationship-rohingya-crisis. (accessed August 28, 2018).

"World Bank Open Data." World Bank, 2019.

Wright, Rebecca, Matt Rivers, and Mark Phillips. "Return to Rakhine: 'Genocide Never Happened in This Country'." *CNN Wire Service*, 10/18/

2018 Oct 18 2018.

Wucherpfennig, Julian, Nils W Metternich, Lars-Erik Cederman, and Kristian Skrede Gleditsch. "Ethnicity, the State, and the Duration of Civil War." *World Politics* 64, no. 1 (2012): 79-115.

Yegar, Moshe. "The Muslims of Burma, a Study of Minority Groups, Weesbaden, Otto Harrassowitz, 1972." *Natmagh Bon Kyaw, History of Anglo-Burmese War (in Burmese), Pagan Publisher, Rangoon* (1975): 7.

Zarni, Maung. "Buddhist Nationalism in Burma." Tricycle.com, https://subscribe.tricycle.com/TRI/?f=donate&_ga=2.143163701.1867242302.1536238370-1407872778.1536238370. (accessed August 31, 2018).

———. "Is Burma's Anti-Muslim Violence Led by "Buddhist Neo-Nazis"?" By Ray Downs (2013).

Zaw, Htet Naing. "Nationalist Group Members' Bid to Form Political Party Rejected." The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/nationalist-group-members-bid-form-political-party-rejected.html. (accessed November 1, 2018).

Zaw, John, and Simon Lewis. "Hardline Monks Turn up Political Heat Ahead of Myanmar Elections." Union of Catholic Asian News, https://www.ucanews.com/news/hardline-monks-turn-up-political-heat-ahead-of-myanmar-elections/73822. (accessed October 24, 2018).

Zaw, Nobel. "Population Control Bill Could 'Stop the Bengalis': Wirathu." The Irrawaddy, https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/population-control-bill-could-stop-the-bengalis-wirathu.html. (accessed November 12, 2018).

Zin, Thiri Min. "Myanmar Officials Respond to Rights Group's Report on Bulldozed Rohingya Villages." Radio Free Asia, Myanmar Service, https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/myanmar-officials-respond-to-rights-groups-report-on-bulldozed-rohingya-villages-02232018163028.html. (accessed October 8, 2018).